

VENICE PRESERV'D:

O R,

A PLOT Discover'd.

A

TRAGEDY.

Written by Mr. THOMAS OTWAY.

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M,DCC,LV.



T O

Her GRACE the DUCHESS
of *Portsmouth*.

MADAM,

WERE it possible for me to let the world know, how intirely Your Grace's goodness has devoted a poor man to your service: were there words enough in speech to express the mighty sense I have of your great bounty towards me; surely I should write and talk of it for ever: but your Grace has given me so large a theme, and laid so very vast a foundation, that imagination wants stock to build upon it. I am as one dumb when I would speak of it; and when I strive to write, I want a scale of thought sufficient to comprehend the height of it. Forgive me then, Madam, if (as a poor peasant once made a present of an apple to an emperor) I bring this small tribute, the humble growth of my little garden, and lay it at
your

your feet. Believe, it is paid you with the utinost gratitude: believe, that, so long as I have thought to remember how very much I owe your generous nature, I will ever have a heart that shall be grateful for it too. Your Grace, next heav'n, deserves it amply from me: that gave me life, but on a hard condition; till your extended favour taught me to prize the gift, and took the heavy burden it was clogged with from me, I mean hard fortune. When I had enemies, that with malicious power kept back and shaded me from those royal beams, whose warmth is all I have, or hope to live by; your noble pity and compassion found me, where I was cast backward from my blessing, down in the rear of fortune, called me up, placed me in the shine, and I have felt its comfort. You have in that restored me to my native right, for a steady faith and loyalty to my Prince was all the inheritance my father left me; and however hardly my ill fortune deal with me, 'tis what I prize so well, that I never pawn'd it yet, and hope I shall never part with it. Nature and fortune were certainly in league, when you were born; and as the first took care to give you beauty enough to enslave

D E D I C A T I O N.

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enslave the hearts of all the world ; so the other resolv'd to do its merit justice, that none but a monarch fit to rule the world should e'er possess it ; and in it he had an empire. The young Prince you have given him, by his blooming virtues, early declares the mighty stock he came from : and as you have taken all the pious care of a dear mother, and a prudent guardian, to give him a noble and generous education ; may it succeed according to his merits and your wishes : may he grow up to be a bulwark to his illustrious father, and a patron to his loyal subjects ; with wisdom and learning to assist him, whenever call'd to his councils ; to defend his right against the encroachments of republicans in his senates ; to cherish such men as shall be able to vindicate the royal cause ; that good and fit servants to the crown may never be lost for want of a protector. May he have courage and conduct fit to fight his battles abroad, and terrify his rebels at home : and, that all these may be yet more sure, may he never, during the spring-time of his years, when those growing virtues ought with care to be cherish'd in order to their ripening ;
may

may he never meet with vicious natures, or the tongues of faithless, sordid, insipid flatterers, to blast 'em. To conclude, may he be as great as the hand of fortune (with his honour) shall be able to make him: and may your Grace, who are so good a mistress, and so noble a patroness, never meet with a less grateful servant, than,

MADAM,

Your Grace's,

intirely Devoted Creature,

THO. OTWAY.



PROLOGUE.

I*N these distracted Times, when each Man dreads
The bloody Stratagems of busy Heads:
When we have fear'd three Years we know not what,
'Till Witnesses begin to die o' th' Rot;
What made our Poet, meddle with a Plot?
Was't that he fancy'd, for the very Sake
And Name of Plot, his trifling Play might take?
For there's not in't one Inch-broad Evidence;
But 'tis, he says, to Reason plain and Sense;
And that he thinks a plausible Defence.
Were Truth by Sense and Reason to be try'd,
Sure all our Swearers might be laid aside;
No; of such Tools our Author has no need,
To make his Plot, or make his Play succeed;
He of black Bills has no prodigious Tales,
Or Spanish Pilgrims cast ashore in Wales:
Here's not one murder'd Magistrate, at least,
Kept rank, like Ven'son for a City Feast,
Grown four Days stiff, the better to prepare
And fit his pliant Limbs to ride in Chair.
Yet here's an Army rais'd, tho' under Ground,
But no Man seen, nor one Commission found:
Here is a Traytor too, that's very old,
Turbulent, subtle, mischievous, and bold,
Bloody, revengeful; and—to crown his Part,
Loves fumbling with a Wench with all his Heart:
'Till, after having many Changes past,
In spite of Age (thanks t' Heaven) is hang'd at last:
Next is a Senator that keeps a Whore,
In Venice none a higher Office bore,
To Lewdness ev'ry Night the Leacher ran;
Shew me, all London, such another Man;
Match him at Mother Creswell's, if you can.
O Poland! Poland! had it been thy Lot,
T' have heard in Time of this Venetian Plot,
Thou surely chosen hadst one King from thence,
And honour'd them, as thou hast England since.*

Dramatis

Dramatis Personæ.

M E N.

Duke of *Venice*.

Priuli, father to *Belvidera*, a senator.

Antonio, a fine speaker in the senate.

Bedamar, the Spanish Ambassador.

Jaffier,

Pierre,

Renault,

Spinoza,

Theodore,

Eliot,

Revillido,

Durand,

Mezzano,

Branveil,

Ternon,

Brabe,

Mr. *D. Williams*.

Mr. *Bowman*.

Mr. *Leigh*.

Mr. *Gillo*.

Mr. *Betterton*.

Mr. *Smith*.

Mr. *Wiltshire*.

Mr. *Percival*.

Conspirators.

W O M E N.

Belvidera,

Aquilina,

Mrs. *Barry*.

Mrs. *Currer*.

Two women, attendants on *Belvidera*.

Two women, servants to *Aquilina*.

The council of ten.

Officer, guard, friar, executioner, and rabble.

VENICE.

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ACT I. SCENE I.

Enter PRIULI and JAFFIER.

PRIULI.

NO more! I'll hear no more; be gone and leave me.

Jaff. Not hear me! by my suffering, but you shall!

My Lord, my Lord! I'm not that abject wretch
You think me: patience! where's the distance throws
Me back so far, but I may boldly speak
In right, tho' proud oppression will not hear me!

Pri. Have you not wrong'd me?

Jaff. Could my nature e'er
Have brook'd injustice, or the doing wrongs,
I need not now thus low have bent myself
'To gain a hearing from a cruel father,
Wrong'd you!

Pri. Yes, wrong'd me in the nicest point,
The honour of my house; you've done me wrong.

B

You

You may remember (for I now will speak,
 And urge its baseness) when you first came home
 From travel, with such hopes as made you look'd on-
 By all men's eyes, a youth of expectation ;
 Pleas'd with your growing virtue, I receiv'd you ;
 Courted, and fought to raise you to your merits :
 My house, my table, nay, my fortune too,
 My very self was yours, you might have us'd me
 To your best service ; like an open friend
 I treated, trusted you, and thought you mine :
 When, in requital of my best endeavours,
 You treacherously practis'd to undo me,
 Seduc'd the weakness of my age's darling,
 My only child, and stole her from my bosom :
 Oh ! *Belvidera* !

Jaff. 'Tis to me you owe her.

Childless you had been else, and in the grave
 Your name extinct ; no more *Priuli* heard of.
 You may remember, scarce five years are past,
 Since in your brigantine you sail'd to see
 The *Adriatic* wedded by our Duke ;
 And I was with you : your unskilful pilot
 Dash'd us upon a rock ; when to your boat
 You made for safety : enter'd first yourself ;
 Th' affrighted *Belvidera*, following next,
 As she stood trembling on the vessel's side,
 Was by a wave wash'd off into the deep ;
 When instantly I plung'd into the sea,
 And, buffetting the billows to her rescue,
 Redeem'd her life with half the loss of mine.
 Like a rich conquest, in one hand I bore her,
 And with the other dash'd the saucy waves,
 That throng'd and press'd to rob me of my prize :
 I brought her, gave her to your despairing arms :
 Indeed you thank'd me ; but a nobler gratitude
 'Rose in her soul : for from that hour she lov'd me,
 'Till for her life she paid me with herself.

Pri. You stole her from me ; like a thief you stole her,
 At dead of night ; that cursed hour you chose

To

To rifle me of all my heart held dear.
 May all your joys in her prove false like mine,
 A sterile fortune and a barren bed,
 Attend you both; continual discord make
 Your days and nights bitter and grievous still:
 May the hard hand of a vexatious need
 Oppress and grind you; till at last you find
 The curse of disobedience all your portion.

Jaff. Half of your curse you have bestow'd in vain
 Heav'n has already crown'd our faithful loves
 With a young boy, sweet as his mother's beauty:
 May he live to prove more gentle than his grandfire,
 And happier than his father.

Pri. Rather live
 To bate thee for his bread, and din your ears
 With hungry cries; whilst his unhappy mother
 Sits down and weeps in bitterness of want.

Jaff. You talk, as if 't would please you.

Pri. 'Twould, by heav'n!
 Once she was dear indeed; the drops that fell
 From my sad heart, when she forgot her duty,
 The fountain of my life was not so precious:
 But she is gone; and, if I am a man,
 I will forget her.

Jaff. Would I were in my grave:

Ari. And she too with thee:
 For, living here, you're but my curs'd remembrancers,
 I once was happy.

Jaff. You use me thus, because you know my soul
 Is fond of *Belvidera*: you perceive
 My life feeds on her, therefore thus you treat me.
 Oh! could my soul ever have found satiety;
 Were I that thief, the doer of such wrongs
 As you upbraid me with, what hinders me,
 But I might send her back to you with contumely,
 And court my fortune where she would be kinder?

Pri. You dare not do it.

Jaff. Indeed, my Lord, I dare not.
 My heart, that awes me, is too much my master:

Three

Three years are past, since first our vows were plighted,
 During which time, the world must bear me witness,
 I've treated *Belvidera* like your daughter,
 The daughter of a senator of *Venice* :
 Distinction, place, attendance, and observance,
 Due to her birth, she always has commanded :
 Out of my little fortune I have done this ;
 Because (tho' hopeless e'er to win your nature)
 The world might see I lov'd her for herself,
 Not as the heirs of the great *Priuli*.

Pri. No more.

Jaff. Yes, all, and then adieu for ever.
 There's not a wretch, that lives on common charity,
 But's happier than me : for I have known
 The luscious sweets of plenty ; every night
 Have slept with soft content about my head,
 And never wak'd but to a joyful morning :
 Yet now must fall like a full ear of corn,
 Whose blossom 'scap'd, yet's wither'd in the ripening.

Pri. Home, and be humble, study to retrench ;
 Discharge the lazy vermin of thy hall,
 Those pageant's of thy folly :
 Reduce the glittering trappings of thy wife
 To humble weeds, fit for thy little state :
 Then to some suburb cottage both retire ;
 Drudge to feed loathsome life ; get brats and starve—
 Home, home, I say.— [Exit.

Jaff. Yes, if my heart would let me—
 This proud, this swelling heart : home I would go,
 But that my doors are hateful to mine eyes,
 Fill'd and damn'd up with gaping creditors,
 Watchful as fowlers when their game will spring :
 I've now not fifty ducats in the world,
 Yet still I am in love, and pleas'd with ruin.
 Oh ! *Belvidera* ! Oh ! she is my wife—
 And we will bear our wayward fate together,
 But ne'er know comfort more.

Enter

Enter PIERRE.

Pri. My friend, good morrow.

How fares the honest part'ner of my heart ?

What, melancholy ! not a word to spare me !

Jaff. I'm thinking, *Pierre*, how that damn'd starving quality,

Call'd honesty, got footing in the world.

Pier. Why, powerful villainy first set it up,
For its own ease and safety : honest men
Are the soft easy cushions, on which knaves
Repose and fatten : were all mankind villains,
They'd starve each other ; lawyers wou'd want practice ;
Cut-throats rewards : each man wou'd kill his brother
Himself ; none would be pay'd or hang'd for murder :
Honesty ! 'twas a cheat invented first
To bind the hands of bold deserving rogues,
That fools and cowards might sit safe in power,
And lord it uncontroul'd above their betters.

Jaff. Then honesty is but a notion ?

Pier. Nothing else,
Like wit, much talk'd-of, not to be defin'd !
He that pretends to most too has least share in't :
'Tis a ragged virtue. Honesty ! no more on't.

Jaff. Sure thou art honest ?

Pier. So indeed men think me.
But they are mistaken, *Jaffier* : I am a rogue
As well as they ;
A fine gay bold-fac'd villain, as thou seest me.
'Tis true, I pay my debts, when they're contracted ;
I steal from no man ; would not cut a throat
To gain admission to a great man's purse,
Or a whore's bed ; I'd not betray my friend
To get his place or fortune ; I scorn to flatter
A blown-up fool above me, to crush the wretch be-
neath me :

Yet, *Jaffier*, for all this I am a villain.

Jaff. A villain !

Pier. Yes, and a most notorious villain ;
To see the sufferings of my fellow-creatures,

And

And own myself a man: to see our senators
 Cheat the deluded people with a shew
 Of liberty, which yet they ne'er must taste of.
 They say, by them our hands are free from fetters,
 Yet whom they please they lay in basest bonds;
 Bring whom they please to infamy and sorrow;
 Drive us like wrecks down the rough tide of power,
 Whilst no hold is to save us from destruction:
 All that bear this are villains, and I one,
 Not to rouse up at the greatest call of nature,
 And check the growth of these domestic spoilers,
 That make us slaves, and tell us 'tis our charter.

Jaff. Oh! *Aquilina!* friend, to lose such beauty,
 The dearest purchase of thy noble labours!
 She was thy right by conquest, as by love.

Pier. Oh! *Jaffier!* I had so fix'd my heart upon her,
 That, whereso'er I fram'd a scheme of life
 For time to come, she was my only joy,
 With which I wish'd to sweeten future cares;
 I fancy'd pleasures, none, but one that loves
 And doats as I did, can imagine like 'em:
 When in the extremity of all these hopes,
 In the most charming hour of expectation,
 Then, when our eager wishes soar the highest,
 Ready to stoop and grasp the lovely game,
 A haggard owl, a worthless kite of prey,
 With his foul wings sail'd in, and spoil'd my quarry.

Jaff. I know the wretch, and scorn him as thou
 hat'st him.

Pier. Curse on the common good that's so protected;
 Where every slave, that heaps up wealth enough
 To do much wrong, becomes the lord of right:
 I, who believ'd no ill could e'er come near me,
 Found in the embraces of my *Aquilina*
 A wretched old, but itching senator,
 A wealthy fool, that had bought out my title:
 A rogue that uses beauty, like a lamb-skin,
 Barely to keep him warm; that filthy cuckow too

Was,

Was, in my absence, crept into my nest,
And spoiling all my brood of noble pleasure.

Jaff. Didst thou not chace him thence ?

Pier. I did, and drove

The rank old-bearded *Hirco* stinking home :
The matter was complain'd-of in the senate ;
I summon'd to appear, and censur'd basely,
For violating something they call *Privilege*——
This was the recompence of all my service :
Would I'd been rather beaten by a coward,
A soldier's mistress, *Jaffier*, is his religion ;
When that's profan'd, all other ties are broken :
That even dissolves all former bonds of service ;
And from that hour I think myself as free
To be the foe, as e'er the friend of *Venice*——
Nay, dear revenge, whene'er thou call'st, I'm ready.

Jaff. I think no safety can be here for virtue,
And grieve, my friend, as much as thou to live
In such a wretched state as this of *Venice*,
Where all agree to spoil the public good ;
And villains fatten with the brave man's labours.

Pier. We've neither safety, unity, nor peace, my
friend,

For the foundation's lost of common good ;
Justice is lame as well as blind amongst us ;
The laws (corrupted to their ends that make 'em)
Serve but for instruments of some new tyranny,
That every day starts up to enslave us deeper.
Now could this glorious cause but find out friends
To do it right, Oh *Jaffier* ! then might'st thou
Not wear these seals of woe upon thy face ;
The proud *Priuli* should be taught humanity,
And learn to value such a son as thou art.
I dare not speak, but my heart bleeds this moment.

Jaff. Curs'd be the cause, tho' I thy friend be part
on't ;

Let me partake the troubles of thy bosom,
For I am us'd to misery, and perhaps
May find a way to sweeten't to thy spirit.

Pier.

Pier. Too soon 'twill reach thy knowledge——

Jaff. Then from thee

Let it proceed. There's virtue in thy friendship
Would make the saddest tale of sorrow pleasing,
Strengthen my constancy, and welcome ruin.

Pier. Then thou art ruin'd !

Jaff. That I long since knew :

I and ill fortune have been long acquainted.

Pier. I pass'd this very moment by thy doors,
And found them guarded by a troop of villains ;
The sons of public rapine were destroying.
They told me, by the sentence of the law,
They had commission to seize all thy fortune :
Nay more, *Priuli's* cruel hand had sign'd it.
Here stood a ruffian with a horrid face,
Lording it o'er a pile of massy plate,
Tumbled into a heap for public sale ;
There was another making villainous jests
At thy undowing ; he had ta'en possession
Of all thy antient most domestic ornaments,
Rich hangings intermix'd and wrought with gold :
The very bed, which on thy wedding-night
Receiv'd thee to the arms of *Belvidera*,
The scene of all thy joys was violated
By the coarse hand of filthy dungeon-villains,
And thrown amongst the common lumber.

Jaff. Now thank heav'n——

Pier. Thank heav'n ! for what ?

Jaff. That I'm not worth a ducat.

Pier. Curse thy dull stars, and the worst fate of
Venice,

Where brothers, friends, and fathers are all false ;
Where there's no truth, no truth ; where innocence
Stoops under vile oppressions, and vice lords it.
Hadst thou but seen, as I did, how at last
Thy beauteous *Belvidera*, like a wretch
That's doom'd to banishment, came weeping forth,
Shining thro' tears, like *April-suns* in showers,
That labour to o'ercome the cloud that loads 'em ;

Whilst

Whilst two young virgins, on whose arms she lean'd,
Kindly look'd up, and at her grief grew sad,
As if they catch'd the sorrows that fell from her;
E'en the lewd rabble that were gather'd round
To see the sight, stood mute when they beheld her;
Govern'd their roaring throats, and grumbled pity:
I could have hugg'd the greasy rogues: they pleas'd me.

Jaff. I thank thee for this story from my soul,
Since now I know the worst that can befall me:
Ah *Pierre*! I have a heart, that could have borne
The roughest wrong my fortune could have done me;
But when I think what *Belvidera* feels,
The bitterness her tender spirits taste of,
I own myself a coward: bear my weakness;
If throwing thus my arms about thy neck,
I play the boy, and blubber in thy bosom:
Oh! I shall drown thee with my sorrows.

Pier. Burn,
First burn, and level *Venice* to thy ruin.
What! starve like beggars brats in frosty weather
Under a hedge, and whine ourselves to death!
Thou, or thy cause, shall never want assistance,
Whilst I have blood or fortune fit to serve thee:
Command my heart; thou'rt every way its master.

Jaff. No there's a secret pride in bravely dying.

Pier. Rats die in holes and corners, dogs run mad;
Man knows a braver remedy for sorrow;
Revenge, the attribute of gods; they stamp'd it
With their great image on our natures. Die!
Consider well the cause, that calls upon thee;
And, if thou'rt base enough, die then: remember
Thy *Belvidera* suffers, *Belvidera*!
Die—Damn first—what! be decently interr'd
In a church-yard, and mingle thy brave dust
With stinking rogues, that rot in dirty winding-sheets,
Surfeit—slain fools, the common dung o'th' soil!

Jaff. Oh!

Pier. Well said, out with't, swear a little——

C

Jaff.

Jaff. Swear!——

By sea and air, by earth, by heav'n, and hell.

I will revenge my *Belvidera*'s tears.

Hark thee my friend—*Priuli*—is——a senator.

Pier. A dog.

Jaff. Agreed.

Pier. Shoot him.

Jaff. With all my heart.

No more, where shall we meet at night!

Pier. I'll tell thee;

On the *Rialto* every night at twelve

I take my evening's walk of meditation:

There we two'll meet, and talk of precious mischief.

Jaff. Farewel.

Pier. At twelve.

Jaff. At any hour; my plagues

Will keep me waking.

[*Ex. Pier.*

Tell me why, good heaven,

Thou mad'st me what I am, with all the spirit,

Aspiring thoughts and elegant desires,

That fill the happiest man? Ah rather why

Did'st thou not form me sordid as my fate,

Base-minded, dull, and fit to carry burdens?

Why have I sense to know the curse that's on me?

Is this just dealing, Nature? *Belvidera!*

Enter BELVIDERA.

Poor *Belvidera!*

Bel. Lead me, lead me, my virgins,

To that kind voice. My Lord, my Love, my refuge!

Happy my eyes, when they behold thy face!

My heavy heart will leave its doleful beating

At sight of thee, and bound with sprightly joys.

Oh smile! as when our loves were in their spring,

And cheer my fainting soul.

Jaff. As when our loves

Were in their spring! has then our fortune chang'd?

Art thou not *Belvidera*, still the same.

Kind,

Kind, good, and tender, as my arms first found thee ?
If thou art alter'd, where shall I have harbour ?
Where ease my loaded heart ? Oh ! where complain ?

Bel. Does this appear like change, or love decaying,
When thus I throw myself into thy bosom
With all the resolution of strong truth ?
Beats not my heart, as 'twould alarm thine
To a new charge of bliss ? I joy more in thee,
Than did thy mother when she hugg'd thee first,
And bless'd the gods for all her travel past.

Jaff. Can there in women be such glorious faith ?
Sure all ill stories of thy sex are false !
Oh woman ! lovely woman ! nature made thee
To temper man : we had been brutes without you :
Angels are painted fair to look like you :
There's in you all that we believe of heaven,
Amazing brightness, purity and truth,
Eternal joy, and everlasting love.

Bel. If love be treasure, we'll be wond'rous rich ;
I have so much, my heart will surely break with't :
Vows can't express it. When I would declare
How great's my joy, I'm dumb with the big thought ;
I swell, I sigh, and labour with my longing.
O ! lead me to some desert wide and wild,
Barren as our misfortunes, where my soul
May have its vent, where I may tell aloud
To the high heav'ns and ev'ry list'ning planet,
With what a boundless shock my bosom's fraught ;
Where I may throw my eager arms about thee,
Give loose to love, with kisses kindling joy,
And let off all the fire that's in my heart.

Jaff. Oh *Belvidera* ! doubly I'm a beggar,
Undone by fortune, and in debt to thee.
Want, worldly want, that hungry meagre fiend,
Is at my heels, and chaces me in view.
Can'st thou bear cold and hunger ? Can these limbs,
Fram'd for the tender offices of love,
Endure the bitter gripes of smarting poverty ?

When

When banish'd by our miseries abroad
 (As suddenly we shall be) to seek out
 In some fair climate, where our names are strangers,
 For charitable succour ; wilt thou then
 When in a bed of straw we shrink together,
 And the bleak winds shall whistle round our heads ;
 Wilt thou then talk thus to me ? Wilt thou then
 Hush my cares thus, and shelter me with love ?

Bel. Oh ! I will love thee, even in madness love thee,
 Tho' my distracted senses should forsake me,
 I'd find some intervals, when my poor heart
 Should 'swage itself, and be let loose to thine.
 Tho' the bare earth be all our resting-place,
 Its roots our food, some cleft our habitation,
 I'll make this arm a pillow for thine head ;
 As thou sighing ly'st, and swell'd with sorrow,
 Creep to thy bosom, pour the balm of love
 Into thy soul, and kiss thee to thy rest ;
 Then praise our God, and watch thee till the morning.

Jaff. Hear this, you heav'ns ! and wonder how you
 made her.

Reign, reign, ye monarchs that divide the world,
 Busy religion ne'er will let you know
 Tranquillity and happiness like mine ;
 Like gaudy ships, the obsequious billows fall,
 And rise again, to lift you in your pride ;
 They wait but for a storm, and then devour you :
 I in my private bark already wreck'd,
 Like a poor merchant driv'n to unknown land,
 That had by chance pack'd up his choicest treasure
 In one dear casket, and sav'd only that ;
 Since I must wander farther on the shore
 Thus hug my little, but my precious store,
 Resolv'd to scorn, and trust my fate no more.

Ex.

A C T

A C T I I . S C E N E I .

Enter PIERRE and AQUILINA.

AQUILINA.

BY all thy wrongs, thou'rt dearer to my arms
Than all the wealth of *Venice* : prithee stay,
And let us love to night.

Pier. No : there's fool,
There's fool about thee : when a woman sells
Her flesh to fools, her beauty's lost to me ;
They leave a tainted sully, where they've pass'd ;
There's such a baneful quality about 'em,
E'en spoils complexions with their nauseousness ;
They infect all they touch ; I cannot think
Of tasting any thing a fool has pall'd.

Aqui. I loath and scorn that fool thou mean'st as
much
Or more than thou can'st ; but the beast has gold,
That makes him necessary ; power too,
To qualify my character, and poise me
Equal with peevish virtue, that beholds
My liberty with envy : in their hearts
They're loose as I am ; but an ugly power
Sits in their faces, and frights pleasures from them.

Pier. Much good may't do you, Madam, with your
senator.

Aqui. My senator ! why can'st thou think that wretch
E'er fill'd thy *Aquilina's* arms with pleasure ?
Think'st thou, because I sometimes give him leave
To foil himself at what he is unfit for ;
Because I force myself t'endure and suffer him,
Think'st thou I love him ? No, by all the joys
Thou ever gav'st me, his presence is my penance ;
The worst thing an old man can be's a lover,
A mere *memento mori* to poor woman.

I never lay by his decrepid side,
But all that night I ponder'd on my grave.

Pier. Would he were well sent thither.

Aqui. That's my wish too :

For then, my *Pierre*, I might have cause with pleasure
To play the hypocrite : Oh ! how I could weep
Over the dying dotard, and kiss him too,
In hopes to smother him quite ; then, when the time
Was come to pay my sorrows at his funeral,
(For he has already made me heir to treasures
Wou'd make me out-act a real widow's whining)
How cou'd I frame my face to fit my mourning !
With wringing hands attend him to his grave,
Fall swooning on his hearse ; take mad possession
E'en of the dismal vault, where he lay buried ;
There, like th' *Ephesian* matron, dwell, till thou,
My lovely soldier, com'st to my deliverance ;
Then, throwing up my veil with open arms
And laughing eyes, run to new dawning joy.

Pier. No more ; I've friends to meet me here to-night,
And must be private. As you prize my friendship,
Keep up your coxcomb ; let him not pry nor listen,
Nor frisk about the house, as I have seen him,
Like a tame mumping squirrel with a bell on ;
Curs will be abroad to bite him, if you do.

Aqui. What friends to meet ! mayn't I be of your
council !

Pier. How ! A woman ask questions out of bed !
Go to your senator, ask him what passes
Among his brethren : he'll hide nothing from you :
But pump not me for politics. No more.
Give order, that whoever in my name
Comes here, receive admittance. So good night.

Aqui. Must we ne'er meet again ! embrace no more ?
Is love so soon and utterly forgotten ?

Pier. As you henceforward treat your fool, I'll think
on't.

Aqui. Curs'd be all fools, and doubly curs'd myself,
The

The worst of fools——I die if he forsakes me ;
And how to keep him heaven or hell instruct me. [*Ex.*]

S C E N E *the Rialto.*

Enter JAFFIER.

Jaff. I'm here ; and thus the shades of night around
me,

I look as if all hell were in my heart,
And I in hell. Nay, surely 'tis so with me !——
For, every step I tread, methinks some fiend
Knocks at my breast, and bids it not be quiet.
I've heard how desperate wretches, like myself,
Have wander'd out at this dead time of night
To meet the foe of mankind in his walk :
Sure I'm so curs'd, that tho' of heav'n forsaken,
No minister of darkness cares to tempt me.
Hell, hell, why sleep'st thou ?

Enter PIERRE.

Pier. Sure I've staid too long :
The clock has struck, and I may lose my proselyte.
Speak, who goes there ?

Jaff. A dog, that comes to howl
At yonder moon. What's he that asks the question ?

Pier. A friend to dogs, for they are honest creatures,
And ne'er betray their masters, never fawn
On any that they love not. Well met, friend

Jaffier !

Jaff. The same. O *Pierre*, thou'rt come in season,
I was just going to pray.

Pier. Ah, that's mechanic ;
Priests make a trade on't, and yet starve by't too ;
No praying ; it spoils business, and time's precious.
Where's *Belvidera* !

Jaff. For a day or two
I've lodg'd her privately, till I see farther
What fortune will do with me. Prithee, friend,

Our

If thou would'st have me fit to hear good counsel,
Speak not of *Belvidera*——

Pier. Speak not of her !

Jaff. Oh no !

Pier. Nor name her ? May be I wish her well.

Jaff. Whom well ?

Pier. Thy wife, thy lovely *Belvidera*,
I hope a man may wish his friend's wife well,
And no harm done.

Jaff. Y'are merry, *Pierre*.

Pier. I am so :

Thou shalt smile too, and *Belvidera* smile ;
We'll all rejoice : here's something to buy pins ;
[*Gives him a Purse.*]

Marriage is chargeable.

Jaff. I but half-wish'd

To see the devil, and he's here already. Well !
What must this buy, rebellion, murder, treason ?
Tell me, which way I must be damn'd for this.

Pier. When last we parted, we'd no qualms like
these,

But entertain'd each other's thoughts like men,
Whose souls were well acquainted. Is the world
Reform'd since our last meeting ; what new miracles
Have happen'd ? Has *Priuli*'s heart relented ?
Can he be honest ?

Jaff. Kind heav'n, let heavy curses
Gall his old age ; cramps, aches rack his bones,
And bitterest disquiet wring his heart.
Oh ! let him live, till life become his burden ;
Let him groan under't long, linger an age
In the worst agonies and pangs of death,
And find its ease, but late.

Pier. Nay, could'st thou not
As well, my friend, have stretch'd the curse to all
The senate round, as to one single villain ?

Jaff. But curses stick not : could I kill with cursing,
By heav'n I know not thirty heads in *Venice*
Should not be blasted : senators should rot

Like

Like dogs on dunghills : but their wives and daughters
Die of their own diseases. Oh ! for a curse
To kill him !

Pier. Daggers, daggers are much better.

Jaff. Ha !

Pier. Daggers.

Jaff. But where are they ?

Pier. Oh ! a thousand

May be dispos'd of in honest hands in *Venice*.

Jaff. Thou talk'st in clouds.

Pier. But yet a heart half wrong'd,

As thine has been, would find the meaning, *Jaffier*.

Jaff. A thousand daggers all in honest hands !

And have not I a friend will stick one here ?

Pier. Yes, if I thought thou wert not to be cherish'd
T' a nobler purpose, I would be that friend,
But thou hast better friends ; friends whom thy wrongs
Have made thy friends ; friends worthy to be call'd so.
I'll trust thee with a secret : there are spirits
This hour at work. But as thou art a man,
Whom I have pick'd and chosen from the world,
Swear that thou wilt be true to what I utter ;
And when I've told thee that which only gods,
And men like gods, are privy to, then swear,
No chance or change shall wrest it from thy bosom.

Jaff. When thou would'st bind me, is there need of
oaths ?

(Green sickness girls lose maidenheads with such counters)
For thou'rt so near my heart, that thou may'st see
Its bottom, sound its strength and firmness to thee :
Is coward, fool, or villain in my face ?
If I seem none of these, I dare believe
Thou would'st not use me in a little cause ;
For I am fit for honour's roughest task,
Nor ever yet found fooling was my province :
And for a villainous inglorious enterprize
I know thy heart so well, I dare lay mine
Before thee, set it to what point thou wilt.

Pier. Nay, 'tis a cause thou wilt be fond of, *Jaffier* ;
For it is founded on the noblest basis,

Our liberties, our natural inheritance :
 There's no religion, no hypocrisy in't ;
 We'll do the business, and ne'er fast and pray for't ;
 Openly act a deed the world may gaze
 With wonder at, and envy when 'tis done.

Jaff. For liberty !

Pier. For liberty, my friend.

Thou shalt be freed from base *Priuli's* tyranny,
 And thy sequester'd fortunes heal'd again :
 I shall be free from those opprobrious wrongs,
 That press me now, and bend my spirit downward ;
 All *Venice* free, and every growing merit
 Succeed to its just right : fools shall be pull'd
 From wisdom's seat ; those baleful unclean birds,
 Those lazy owls, who (perch'd near fortune's top)
 Sit only watchful with their heavy wings
 To cuff down new-fledg'd virtues, that would rise
 To nobler heights, and make the grove harmonious.

Jaff. What can I do ?

Pier. Canst thou not kill a senator ?

Jaff. Were there one wise or honest, I could kill him
 For herding with that nest of fools or knaves.
 By all my wrongs, thou talk'st as if revenge
 Were to be had ; and the brave story warms me.

Pier. Swear then !

Jaff. I do, by all those glittering stars,
 And you great ruling planet of the night,
 By all good powers above and ill below,
 By love and friendship dearer than my life,
 No pow'r or death shall make me false to thee.

Pier. Here we embrace, and I'll unlock my heart.
 A council's held hard by, where the destruction
 Of this great empire's hatching : there I'll lead thee,
 But be a man, for thou art to mix with men
 Fit to disturb the peace of all the world,
 And rule it when 'tis wildest——

Jaff. I give thee thanks

For this kind warning : yes, I'll be a man ;
 And charge thee *Pierre*, whene'er thou see'st y fears
Betray

Betray me less, to rip this heart of mine
Out of my breast, and shew it for a coward's.
Come, let's be gone, for from this hour I chace
All little thoughts, all tender human follies
Out of my bosom : vengeance shall have room :
Revenge !

Pier. And liberty !

Jaff. Revenge ! revenge !

*The SCENE changes to AQUILINA's House,
the Greek Courtesan.*

Enter RENAULT.

Ren. Why was my choice ambition, the worst ground
A wretch can build on ! 'tis, indeed, at distance,
A goodly prospect, tempting to the view ;
The height delights us, and the mountain-top
Looks beautiful, because 'tis nigh to heav'n ;
But we ne'er think how sandy's the foundation,
What storm will batter, and what tempest shake us.
Who's there ?

Enter SPINOSA.

Spin. *Renault*, good-morrow, for by this time
I think the scale of night has turn'd the balance,
And weighs up morning ? Has the clock struck
twelve ?

Ren. Yes ; clocks will go as they are set : but man,
Irregular man's ne'er constant, never certain :
I've spent at least three precious hours of darkness
In waiting dull attendance ; 'tis the curse
Of diligent virtue to be mix'd, like mine,
With giddy tempers, souls but half-resolv'd.

Spin. Hell seize that soul amongst us, it can frighten.

Ren. What's then the cause that I am here alone ?
Why are we not together ?

Enter

Enter ELIOT.

O, Sir, welcome !

You are an *Englishman* : when treason's hatching,
One might have thought you'd not have been behind-
hand.

In what whore's lap have you been lolling ?
Give but an *Englishman* his whore and ease,
Beef, and a sea-coal fire, he's your's for ever.

Eli. Frenchman, you are faucy.

Ren. How ?

*Enter BEDAMAR the Ambassador, THEODORE, BRAM-
VEIL, DURAND, BRABE, REVILLIDO, MEZ-
ZANA, TERNON, RETROSI, Conspirators.*

Bed. At difference, fy !

Is this a time for quarrels ? thieves and rogues
Fall out and brawl : should men of your high calling,
Men separated by the choice of providence
From the gross heap of mankind, and set here
In this assembly as in one great jewel,
T'adorn the bravest purpose it e'er smil'd on ;
Should you, like boys, wrangle for trifles ?

Ren. Boys !

Bed. *Renault*, thy hand.

Ren. I thought I'd given my heart
Long since to every man that mingles here ;
But grieve to find it trusted with such tempers,
That can't forgive my forward age its weakness.

Bed. *Eliot*, thou once had'st virtue ; I have seen
Thy stubborn temper bend with god-like goodness,
Not half thus courted ; 'tis thy nation's glory,
To hug the foe that offers brave alliance.
Once more embrace, my friends—we'll all embrace—
United thus, we are the mighty engine
Must twist this rooted empire from its basis.
Totters not it already ?

Eli. Would 'twere tumbling.

Bed. Nay, it shall down : this night we seal its ruin.

Enter

Enter PIERRE.

Oh ! *Pierre*, thou art welcome.
Come to my breast, for by its hopes thou look'st
Lovely dreadful, and the fate of *Venice*
Seems on thy sword already. Oh ! my *Mars* !
The poets, that first feign'd a god of war,
Sure prophecy'd of thee.

Pier. Friends, was not *Brutus*,
(I mean that *Brutus*, who in open senate
Stabb'd the first *Cæsar* that usurp'd the world)
A gallant man ?

Ren. Yes, and *Cataline* too ;
Tho' story wrongs his fame : for he conspir'd
To prop' the reeling glory of his country :
His cause was good.

Bed. And our's as much above it,
As, *Renault*, thou'rt superior to *Cethegus*,
Or *Pierre*, to *Cassius*.

Pier. Then to what we aim at,
When do we start ? or must we talk for ever ?

Bed. No, *Pierre*, the deed's near birth : fate seems
to have set

The business up, and given it to our care :
I hope there's not a heart nor hand amongst us,
But is firm and ready.

All. All.

We'll die with *Bedamar*.

Bed. O men
Matchless ! as will your glory be hereafter :
The game is for a matchless prize, if won :
If lost, disgraceful ruin.

Ren. Who can lose it ?

The public stock's a beggar ; one *Venetian*
Trusts not another ; look into their stores
Of general safety ; empty magazines,
A tatter'd fleet, a murmuring unpaid army,
Bankrupt nobility, a harass'd commonalty,
A factious, giddy, and divided senate,
Is all the strength of *Venice* : let's destroy it ;

Let's

Let's fill their magazines with arms to awe them,
 Mann out their fleet, and make their trade maintain it;
 Let loose the murmuring army on their masters
 To pay themselves with plunder; lop their nobles
 To the base roots, whence most of 'em first sprung;
 Enslave the rout, whom smarting will make humble;
 Turn out their droning senate, and possess
 That seat of empire which our souls were fram'd for.

Pier. Ten thousand men are armed at your nod,
 Commanded all by leaders fit to guide
 A battle for the freedom of the world:
 This wretched state has starv'd 'em in its service;
 And, by your bounty quicken'd, they're resolv'd
 To serve your glory; and revenge their own:
 They've all their different quarters in this city,
 Watch for the alarm, and grumble 'tis so tardy.

Bed. I doubt not friend, but thy unwearied diligence
 Has still kept waking, and it shall have ease;
 After this night it is resolv'd we meet
 No more, till *Venice* own us for her lords.

Pier. How lovely the *Adriatic* whore,
 Dress'd in her flames, will shine! devouring flames!
 Such as shall burn her to the watry bottom,
 And hiss in her foundation.

Bed. Now if any
 Amongst us, that owns this glorious cause,
 Have friends or interest he'd wish to save,
 Let it be told: the general doom is seal'd:
 But I'd forego the hopes of a world's empire,
 Rather than wound the bowels of my friend.

Pier. I must confess, you there have touch'd my
 weakness,
 I have a friend, hear it! such a friend!
 My heart was ne'er shut to him. Nay, I'll tell you,
 He knows the very business of this hour;
 But he rejoices in the cause, and loves it:
 We've chang'd a vow to live and die together,
 And he's at hand to ratify it here.

Ren. How! all betray'd.

Pier.

Pier. No—I've dealt nobly with you,
I've brought my all into the public stock :
I'd but one friend, and him I'll share amongst you :
Receive and cherish him ; or if, when seen
And search'd, you find him worthless, as my tongue
Has lodg'd this secret in his faithful breast,
To ease your fears I wear a dagger here
Shall rip it out again, and give you rest.
Come forth, thou only good I e'er could boast of.

Enter JAFFIER, with a Dagger.

Bed. His presence bears the shew of manly virtue.

Jaff. I know you'll wonder all, that thus uncall'd
I dare approach this place of fatal councils ;
But I'm amongst you, and by heav'n it glads me
To see so many virtues thus united
To restore justice, and dethrone oppression.
Command this sword if you would have it quiet,
Into this breast ; but, if you think it worthy
To cut the throats of reverend rogues in robes,
Send me into the curs'd assembled senate :
It shrinks not, tho' I meet a father there.
Wou'd you behold this city flaming ? Here's
A hand shall bear a lighted torch at noon
To th' Arsenal, and set its gates on fire.

Ren. You talk thus well, Sir.

Jaff. Nay—by heav'n I'll do this.
Come, come, I read distrust in all your faces ;
You fear me a villain, and indeed 'tis odd
To hear a stranger talk thus, at first meeting,
Of matters that have been so well debated ;
But I come ripe with wrongs, as you with councils ;
I hate this senate, am a foe to *Venice* ;
A friend to none, but men resolv'd like me
To push on mischief. Oh ! did you but know me,
I need not talk thus !

Bed. Pierre, I must embrace him,
My heart beats to this man, as if it knew him.

Ren. I never lov'd these huggers.

Jaff.

Jaff. Still I see
The cause delights me not. Your friends survey me
As I were dangerous——But I come arm'd
Against all doubts, and to your trust will give
A pledge, worth more than all the world can pay for;
My *Belvidera*! Ho! my *Belvidera*!

Bed. What wonder next?

Jaff. Let me intreat you,
As I have henceforth hope to call ye friends,
That all but the ambassador, this
Grave guide of councils, with my friend that owns me,
Withdraw a while to spare a woman's blushes.

[*Exeunt all but Bed. Ren. Jeff. Pier.*

Bed. Pierre, whither will this ceremony lead us?

Jaff. My *Belvidera*! *Belvidera*!

Enter BELVIDERA.

Belv. Who?

Who calls so loud at this late peaceful hour?
That voice was wont to come in gentle whispers,
And fill my ears with the soft breath of love:
Thou hourly image of my thoughts, where art thou?

Jaff. Indeed 'tis late.

Belv. Oh! I have slept and dreamt,
And dreamt again: where hast thou been, thou loiterer?

Tho' my eyes clos'd, my arms have still been open'd:
Stretch'd every way betwixt my broken slumbers,
To search if thou wer't come to crown my rest:
There's no repose without thee: Oh! the day
Too soon will break, and wake us to our sorrow:
Come, come, to bed, and bid thy cares good-night.

Jaff. Oh! *Belvidera*! we must change the scene,
In which the past delights of love were tasted:
The poor sleep little; we must learn to watch
Our labours late and early every morning;
'Midst winter frosts, thin clad and fed with sparing,
Rise to our toils, and drudge away the day.

Belv.

Belv. Alas ! where am I ! whither is't you lead me !
Methinks I read distraction in your face,
Something less gentle than the fate you tell me.
You shake and tremble too ! your blood runs cold !
Heav'ns guard my Love, and bless his heart with
patience.

Jaff. That I have patience, let our fate bear witness,

Who has ordain'd it so that thou and I,
(Thou, the divinest good man e'er possess'd,
And I, the wretched't of the race of man)
This very hour, without one tear, must part.

Bel. Part ! must we part ! Oh ! am I then forsaken ?
Why drag you from me ? Whither are you going ?
My Dear ! my Life ! my Love !

Jaff. Oh ! friend !

Bel. Speak to me.

Jaff. Take her from my heart,
She'll gain such hold else, I shall ne'er get loose ;
I charge thee take her, but with tender't care
Relieve her troubles, and assuage her sorrows.

Ren. Rise, Madam, and command amongst your
servants.

Jaff. To you, Sirs, and your honours, I bequeath
her,

And with her this, when e'er I prove unworthy——
[Gives a Dagger.

You know the rest——Then strike it to her heart ;
And tell her, He who three whole happy years
Lay in her arms, and there each night repeated
The passionate vows still of increasing love,
Sent that reward for all her truth and sufferings.

Bel. Nay, take my life, since he has sold it cheaply ;
Or send me to some distant clime your slave ?
But let it be far off, lest my complainings
Should reach his guilty ears, and shake his peace.

Jaff. No, *Belvidera*, I've contriv'd thy honour :
Trust to my faith, and be but fortune kind
To me, as I'll preserve that faith unbroken,

E

When

When next we meet, I'll lift thee to a height
 Shall gather all the gazing world about thee,
 To wonder what strange virtue plac'd thee there.
 But, if we ne'er meet more——

Bel. O! thou unkind one;
 Ne'er meet more! have I deserv'd this from you?
 Look on me, tell me; speak thou dear deceiver.
 Why am I separated from thy love?
 If I am false, accuse me; but if true,
 Don't, prithee don't, in poverty forsake me;
 But pity the sad heart, that's torn with parting.
 Yet hear me & yet recal me— [*Ex. Ren. Bed. and Bel.*]

Jaff. Oh! my eyes,
 Look not that way, but turn yourselves a while
 Into my heart, and be wean'd altogether.
 My friend, where art thou?

Pier. Here, my honour's brother.

Jaff. Is *Belvidera* gone?

Pier. *Renault* has led her

Back to her own apartment; but by heav'n,
 Thou must not see her more, till our work's over.

Jaff. No?

Pier. Not for your life.

Jaff. O *Pierre*, wer't thou but she,
 How I would pull thee down into my heart,
 Gaze on thee till my eye-strings crack'd with love;
 Till all my sinews with its fire extended,
 Fix'd me upon the rack of ardent longing:
 Then, swelling, fighting, raging to be blest,
 Come like a panting turtle to thy breast;
 On thy soft bosom hovering, bill and play,
 Confess the cause why last I fled away;
 Own 'twas a fault, but swear to give it o'er,
 And never follow false ambition more.

A C T

A C T I I I . S C E N E I .

Enter BELVIDERA.

BELVIDERA.

I'm sacrific'd! I'm sold! betray'd to shame!
 Inevitable ruin has inclos'd me!
 No sooner was I to my bed repair'd
 To weigh and (weeping) ponder my condition,
 But the old hoary wretch, to whose false care
 My peace and honour was intrusted, came
 (Like *Tarquin*) ghastly with infernal lust.
 Oh! thou *Roman Lucrece*! thou could'st find friends
 To vindicate thy wrong;
 I never had but one, and he's prov'd false:
 He that should guard my virtue, has betray'd it;
 Left me! undone me! Oh that I could hate him!
 Where shall I go? Oh whither, whither wander!

Enter JAFFIER.

Jaff. Can *Belvidera* want a resting-place,
 When these poor arms are ready to receive her!
 Oh! 'tis in vain to struggle with desires.
 Strong is my love to thee; for, every moment
 I'm from thy sight, the heart within my bosom
 Mourns like a tender infant in its cradle,
 Whose nurse had left it: come, and with the songs
 Of gentle love persuade it to its peace.

Belv. I fear the stubborn wanderer will not own me;
 'Tis grown a rebel, to be rul'd no longer,
 Scorns the indulgent bosom that first lull'd it;
 And, like a disobedient child, disdains
 The soft authority of *Belvidera*.

Jaff. There was a time——

Belv. Yes, yes, there was a time
 When *Belvidera's* tears, her cries, and sorrows,

Were

Were not despis'd ; when if she chanc'd to sigh,
Or look'd but sad ;—there was indeed a time
When *Jaffier* would have ta'en her in his arms,
Eas'd her declining head upon his breast,
And never left her till he found the cause.

But let her now weep seas
Cry till she rend the earth, sigh till she burst
Her heart asunder ; still she bears it all,
Deaf as the winds, and as the rocks unshaken.

Jaff. Have I been deaf ? Am I that rock unmov'd,
Against whose root tears beat, and sighs are sent ?
In vain have I beheld thy sorrows calmly !
Witness against me, heav'ns, have I done this ?
'Then bear me in a whirlwind back again,
And let that angry dear one ne'er forgive me.
Oh ! thou too rashly censur'st of my love !
Could'st thou but think how I have spent this night,
Dark and alone, no pillow to my head,
Rest in my eyes, nor quiet in my heart !
'Thou would'st not, *Belvidera*, surely thou would'st not
Talk to me thus, but like a pitying angel,
Spreading thy wings ; come settle on my breast,
And hatch warm comforts there, e'er sorrows freeze it.

Belv. Why then, poor mourner, in what baleful
corner

Hast thou been talking with that witch, the night ?
On what cold stone hast thou been stretch'd along,
Gathering the grumbling winds about thy head,
To mix with theirs the accent of thy woes ?

Oh ! now I find the cause my Love forsakes me :
I am no longer fit to bear a share

In his concerns : my weak female virtue
Must not be trusted : 'tis too frail and tender.

Jaff. Oh ! *Porcia* ! *Porcia* ! what a soul was thine ?

Belv. That *Porcia* was a woman ; and when *Brutus*,
Big with the fate of *Rome*, (heaven guard thy safety !)
Conceal'd from her the labours of the mind ;
She let him see her blood was great as his,
Flow'd from a spring as noble, and a heart

Fit to partake his troubles as his love.

Fetch, fetch, that dagger back, the dreadful dower
Thou gav'st last night in parting with me; strike it
Here to my heart, and as the blood flows from it,
Judge if it runs not pure as *Cato's* daughter's.

Jaff. Thou art too good, and I indeed unworthy,
Unworthy so much virtue: teach me how
I may deserve such matchless love as thine,
And see with what attention I'll obey thee.

Belv. Do not despise me: that's the all I ask.

Jaff. Despise thee! hear me——

Belv. Oh! thy charming tongue
Is but too well acquainted with my weakness;
Knows, let it name but love, my melting heart
Dissolves within my breast; till with clos'd eyes
I reel into thy arms, and all's forgotten.

Jaff. What shall I do?

Belv. Tell me, be just, and tell me,
Why dwells that busy cloud upon thy face?
Why am I made a stranger? Why that sigh,
And I not know the cause? Why then the world
Is wrap'd in rest, why chuses then my Love
To wander up and down in horrid darkness,
Loathing his bed, and these desiring arms?
Why are these eyes blood shot with tedious watching?
Why starts he now, and looks as if he wish'd
His fate were finish'd? Tell me, ease my fear;
Left, when we next time meet, I want the power
To search into the sickness of thy mind,
But talk as wildly then, as thou look'st now.

Jaff. Oh! *Belvidera*!

Belv. Why was I last night deliver'd to a villain?

Jaff. Ha! a villain?

Belv. Yes, to a villain! Why at such an hour
Meets that assembly, all made up of wretches,
That look as hell had drawn them into league?
Why, I in this hand, and in that a dagger,
Was I deliver'd with such dreadful ceremonies?
" To you, Sirs, and to your honour, I bequeath her,

" And

" *And with her this: whene'er I prove unworthy—*
 " *You know the rest—then strike it to her heart.*

Oh! why was that *rest* conceal'd from me? must I
 Be made the hostage of a hellish trust?

For such I know I am; that's all my value:

But, by the love and loyalty I owe thee,
 I'll free thee from the bondage of these slaves;

Strait to the Senate, tell 'em all I know,

All that I think, all that my fears inform me.

Jaff. Is this the *Roman* virtue! this the blood
 That boasts its purity with *Cato's* daughter!
 Would she have e'er betray'd her *Brutus*?

Belv. No:

For *Brutus* trusted her: wer't thou so kind,

What would not *Belvidera* suffer for thee?

Jaff. I shall undoe myself, and tell thee all.

Belv. Look not upon me as I am a woman,
 But as a bone, thy wife, thy friend; who long
 Has had admission to thy heart, and there
 Study'd the virtues of thy gallant nature:
 Thy constancy, thy courage, and thy truth,
 Have been my daily lesson: I have learn'd 'em.
 And, bold as thou, can suffer or despise
 The worst of fates for thee, and with thee share 'em.

Jaff. Oh! thou divinest Power! look down and
 hear

My prayers! instruct me to reward this virtue!

Yet think a little, e'er thou tempt me further;

Think I've a tale to tell will shake thy nature,

Melt all this boasted constancy thou talk'st of

Into vile tears and despicable sorrows:

Then if thou should'st betray me!

Belv. Shall I swear?

Jaff. No, do not swear: I would not violate
 Thy tender nature with so rude a bond:

But as thou hop'st to see me live my days,

And love thee long, lock this within thy breast:

I've bound myself by all the strictest sacraments,

Divine and human—

Belv.

Belv. Speak!

Jaff. To kill thy father——

Belv. My father!

Jaff. Nay, the throats of the whole senate
Shall bleed, my *Belvidera*; he, amongst us,
That spares his father, brother, or his friend,
Is damn'd. How rich and beauteous will the face
Of ruin look, when these wide streets run blood?
I, and the glorious partners of my fortune,
Shouting, and striding o'er the prostrate dead
Still to new waste; whilst thou far off in safety,
Smiling, shalt see the wonders of our daring;
And, when night comes, with praise and love re-
ceive me.

Belv. Oh!

Jaff. Have a care, and shrink not even in thought:
For if thou do'st——

Belv. I know it, thou wilt kill me.
Do, strike thy sword into this bosom: lay me
Dead on the earth, and then thou wilt be safe.
Murder my father! tho' his cruel nature
Has perfect'd me to my undoing:
Driven me to basest wants; can I behold him,
With smiles of vengeance, butcher'd in his age?
The sacred fountain of my life destroy'd?
And can'st thou shed the blood, that gave me being?
Nay, be a traitor too, and sell thy country?
Can thy great heart descend so vilely low,
Mix with hir'd slaves, bravoës, and common stabbers,
Nose-flutters, alley-lurking villains! join
With such a crew, and take a ruffian's wages
To cut the throats of wretches as they sleep?

Jaff. Thou wrong'st me, *Belvidera*! I've engag'd
With men of souls; fit to reform the ills
Of all mankind: there's not a heart amongst them
But's stout as death, yet honest as the nature
Of man first made, e'er fraud and vice were fashions.

Belv. What's he, to whose curs'd hands last night
thou gav'st me?

Was

Was that well done ? Oh ! I could tell a story
Would rouse thy lion-heart out of its den,
And make it rage with terrifying fury.

Jaff. Speak on, I charge thee.

Belv. Oh ! my Love, if e'er

Thy *Belvidera's* peace deserv'd thy care,
Remove me from this place : last night, last night !

Jaff. Distract me not, but give me all the truth.

Belv. No sooner wer't thou gone, and I alone,
Left in the power of that old son of mischief ;
No sooner was I lain on my sad bed,
But that vile wretch approach'd me, loose, unbutton'd,
Ready for violation : then my heart
Throbb'd with its fears ; Oh ! how I wept and sigh'd !
And shrunk and trembled ! wish'd in vain for him
That shou'd protect me ! thou, alas, wert gone.

Jaff. Patience sweet heav'n, till I make vengeance
sure.

Belv. He drew the hideous dagger forth, thou
gav'st him,

And with upbraiding smiles he said, *Behold it,*

This is the pledge of a false husband's love :

And in my arms then press'd, and would have clasp'd
me ;

But with my cries I scar'd his coward heart,

'Till he withdrew, and mutter'd vows to hell.

These are thy friends ! with these thy life, thy honour,
Thy love all stak'd, and all will go to ruin.

Jaff. No more ; I charge thee keep this secret close ;
Clear up thy sorrows, look as if thy wrongs
Were all forgot, and treat him like a friend,
As no complaint were made. No more ; retire,
Retire, my Life, and doubt not of my honour ;
I'll heal its failings, and deserve thy love.

Belv. Oh ! should I part with thee, I fear thou wilt
In anger leave me, and return no more.

Jaff. Return no more ! I would not live without thee
Another night to purchase the creation. .

Belv. When shall we meet again ?

Jaff.

Jaff. Anon at twelve
I'll steal myself to thy expecting arms,
Come like a travell'd dove, and bring thee peace.

Belw. Indeed!

Jaff. By all our loves.

Belw. 'Tis hard to part:

But sure no falshood ever look'd so fairly.

Farewel; remember twelve.

[*Exit.*

Jaff. Let heav'n forget me,
When I remember not thy truth, thy love.
How curs'd is my condition, toss'd and justled
From every corner; fortune's common fool,
The jest of rogues, an instrumental ass
For villains to lay loads of shame upon,
And drive about just for their ease and scorn.

Enter PIERRE.

Pier. Jaffier!

Jaff. Who calls?

Pier. A friend, that could have wish'd
T'have found thee otherways employ'd: what, hunt
A wife on the dull soil! sure a staunch husband
Of all hounds is the dullest. Wilt thou never,
Never be wean'd from caudles and confessions?
What feminine tales has thou been list'ning to,
Of unair'd shirts, catarrhs and tooth-ach, got
By thin sol'd shoes? Damnation! that a fellow,
Chosen to be a sharer in the destruction
Of a whole people, should sneak thus in corners
To ease his fulsome lusts, and fool his mind.

Jaff. May not a man then trifle out an hour
With a kind woman, and not wrong his calling!

Pier. Not in a cause like ours.

Jaff. Then, friend, our cause
Is in a damn'd condition: for I'll tell thee,
That canker-worm, call'd *leachery*, has touch'd it;
'Tis tainted vilely: would'st thou think it? *Renault*
(That mortify'd old wither'd winter-rogue)
Loves simple fornication like a priest;

I found him out for watering at my wife ;
 He visited her last night, like a kind guardian :
 Faith, she has some temptation, that's the truth on't.

Pier. He durst not wrong his trust,

Jaff. 'Twas something late tho'
 To take the freedom of a Lady's chamber.

Pier. Was she in bed ?

Jaff. Yes, faith! in virgin-sheets
 White as her bosom, *Pierre*, dish'd neatly up,
 Might tempt a weaker appetite to taste.
 Oh! how the old fox stunk I warrant thee,
 When the rank fit was on him.

Pier. Patience, guide me !
 He us'd no violence ?

Jaff. No, no, out on't, violence !
 Play'd with her neck! brush'd her with his grey beard.
 Struggl'd and touz'd, tickl'd her till she squeak'd a little,
 May be, or so——but not a jot of violence——

Pier. Damn him.

Jaff. Ay, so say I: but hush, no more on't ;
 All hitherto is well, and I believe
 Myself no monster yet: tho' no man knows
 What fate he's born to. Sure 'tis near the hour
 We all should meet for our concluding orders :
 Will the ambassador be here in person ?

Pier. No: he has sent commission to that villain *Renault*
 To give the executing charge :
 I'd have thee be a man, if possible,
 And keep thy temper ; for a brave revenge
 Ne'er comes too late.

Jaff. Fear not, I am cool as patience.
 Had he compleated my dishonour, rather
 Than hazard the success our hopes are ripe for,
 I'd bear it all with mortifying virtue.

Pier. He's yonder, coming this way thro' the hall ;
 His thoughts seem full.

Jaff. Prithee retire and leave me
 With him alone: I'll put him to some trial ;
 See how his rotten part will bear the touching.

Pier.

Pier. Be careful then.

[*Exit.*

Jaff. Nay, never doubt, but trust me.
What, be a devil! take a damning oath
For shedding native blood! Can there be a sin
In merciful repentance? Oh! this villain!

Enter RENAULT.

Ren. Perverse and peevish: what a slave is man
To let his itching flesh thus get the better of him?
Dispatch the tool her husband—that were well.
Who's there?

Jaff. A man.

Ren. My friend, my near ally,
The hostage of your faith, my beauteous charge is
very well.

Jaff. Sir, are you sure of that?
Stands she in perfect health? Beats her pulse even?
Neither too hot nor cold?

Ren. What means that question?

Jaff. Oh! women have fantastic constitutions,
Inconstant as their wishes, always wavering,
And never fix'd: was it not boldly done
Even at first sight to trust the thing I lov'd
(A tempting treasure too) with youth so fierce
And vigorous as thine? but thou art honest.

Ren. Who dare accuse me?

Jaff. Curs'd be he that doubts
Thy virtue; I have try'd it, and declare,
Were I to chuse a guardian of my honour,
I'd put it in thy keeping: for I know thee.

Ren. Know me!

Jaff. Ay, know thee: there's no falshood in thee,
'Thou look'st just as thou art: let us embrace.
Now would'st thou cut my throat, or I cut thine.

Ren. You dare not do't.

Jaff. You lie, Sir.

Ren. How!

Jaff. No more.

'Tis a base world, and must reform, that's all.

Enter

Enter SPINOSA, THEODORE, ELIOT, REVELLIDO, DURAND, BRAMVEIL, and the rest of the Conspirators.

Ren. Spinosa, Theodore.

Spin. The same.

Ren. You are welcome.

Spin. You are trembling, Sir.

Ren. 'Tis a cold night, indeed ; I am aged, Full of decay, and natural infirmities ; [Pier. re-enters. We shall be warm, my friends, I hope, to-morrow.

Pier. 'Twas not well done ; thou should'st have stroak'd him,

And not have gaul'd him.

Jaff. Damn him, let him chew on't.

Heav'n ! where am I ? Befet with cursed friends, That wait to damn me ! What a devil's man, When he forgets his nature——Hush, my heart.

Ren. My friends, 'tis late : are we assembled all ? Where's Theodore ?

Theo. At hand.

Ren. Spinosa.

Spin. Here.

Ren. Bramveil.

Bram. I am ready.

Ren. Durand and Brabe.

Dur. Command us ;

We are both prepar'd.

Ren. Mezzana, Revellido.

Ternon. Retrof. : Oh ! you're men I find, Fit to behold your fate, and meet her summons : To-morrow's rising sun must see you all Deck'd in your honours. Are the soldiers ready ?

All. All, all.

Ren. You, Durand, with your thousand must possess St. Marks ; you, captain, know your charge already ; 'Tis to secure the ducal palace : you, Brabe, with a hundred more, must gain the Secque : With the like number, Bramveil, to the Procurale. Be all this done with the least tumult possible,

'Till

'Till in each place you post sufficient guards :
Then sheath your swords in every breast you meet.

Jaff. Oh ! reverend cruelty ! damn'd bloody villain !

Ren. During this execution, *Durand*, you
Must in the midst keep your battalia fast ;
And, *Theodore*, be sure to plant the cannon
That may command the streets ; whilst *Revellido*,
Mazzano, *Ternon*, and *Retrofi* guard you.
This done, we'll give the general alarm,
Apply petards, and force the ars'nal gates ;
Then fire the city round in several places,
Or with our cannon (if it dare resist)
Batter to ruin. But above all I charge you,
Shed blood enough, spare neither sex nor age,
Name nor condition ; if there lives a senator
After to-morrow, tho' the dullest rogue
That e'er said nothing, we have lost our ends :
If possible, let's kill the very name
Of senator, and bury it in blood.

Jaff. Merciless horrid slave—Ay, blood enough !
Shed blood enough, old *Renault* ! how thou charm'st me !

Ren. But one thing more, and then farewell, till fate
Join us again, or separate us ever :
First let's embrace. Heav'n knows who next shall thus
Wing ye together : but let us all remember,
We wear no common cause upon our sword :
Let each man think, that on his single virtue
Depends the good and fame of all the rest ;
Eternal honour, or perpetual infamy.
Let us remember, thro' what dreadful hazards
Propitious fortune hitherto hath led us :
How often on the brink of some discovery
Have we stood tottering, yet still kept our ground
So well, that the busiest searchers ne'er could follow.
Those subtle tracks, which puzzled all suspicion ?
You droop, Sir.

Jaff. No : with most profound attention
I've heard it all, and wonder at thy virtue.

Ren.

Ren. Tho 'there be yet few hours 'twixt them and ruin,
 Are not the Senate lull'd in full security,
 Quiet and satisfied, as fools are always?
 Never did so profound repose fore-run
 Calamity so great: Nay, our good fortune
 Has blinded the most piercing of mankind,
 Strengthen'd the fearfullest, charm'd the most suspicious,
 Confounded the most subtle: For we live,
 We live, my friends, and quickly shall our life
 Prove fatal to these tyrants: let's consider,
 That we destroy oppression, avarice,
 A people nurs'd up equally with vices
 And loathsome lusts, which nature most abhors,
 And such as without shame she cannot suffer.

Jaff. Oh! *Belvidera*, take me to thy arms,
 And shew me where's my peace, for I have lost it. [*Exit.*]

Ren. Without the least remorse then let's resolve
 With fire and sword t'exterminate these tyrants;
 And when we shall behold these curs'd tribunals
 Stain'd by the tears and sufferings of the innocent,
 Burning with flames rather from heav'n than ours,
 The raging, furious, and un pitying soldier
 Pulling his reeking dagger from the bosoms
 Of gasping wretches; death in every quarter,
 With all that sad disorder can produce
 To make a spectacle of horror; then,
 Then let us call to mind, my dearest friends,
 That there is nothing pure upon the earth;
 That the most valu'd things have most alloys,
 And that in change of all those vile enormities,
 Under whose weight this wretched country labours,
 The means are only in our hands to crown them.

Pier. And may those powers above, that are propi-
 tious
 To gallant minds, record this cause and blifs it.

Ren. Thus happy, thus secure of all we wish for,
 Should there, my friends, be found amongst us one
 False to this glorious enterprize, what fate,
 What vengeance were enough for such a villain?

Ed.

Eli. Death here without repentance, hell hereafter.

Ren. Let that be my lot, if, as here I stand,
Lifted by fate among her darling sons,
Tho' I had one only brother, dear by all
The strictest ties of nature ; tho' one hour
Had given us birth, one fortune fed our wants,
One only love, and that but of each other,
Still fill'd our minds : could I have such a friend
Join'd in this cause, and had but ground to fear
He meant foul play : may this right hand drop from me,
If I'd not hazard all my future peace,
And stab him to the heart before you. Who ?

Who would do less ? would't thou not, *Pierre*, the same ?

Pier. You've singled me, Sir, out for this hard question,
As if 'twere started only for my sake ;
Am I the thing you fear ? Here, here's my bosom,
Search it with all your swords : am I a traitor ?

Ren. No: But I fear your late commanded friend
Is little less : come, Sirs, 'tis now no time
To trifle with our safety. Where's this *Jessier* ?

Spin. He left the room just now in strange disorder.

Ren. Nay, there is danger in him : I observ'd him ;
During the time I took for explanation,
He was transported from most deep attention
To a confusion which he could not smother.
His looks grew full of sadness and surprize,
All which betray'd a wavering spirit in him,
That labour'd with reluctancy and sorrow.
What's requisite for safety must be done
With speedy execution ; he remains
Yet in our power : I for my own part wear
A dagger——

Pier. Well.

Ren. And I could wish it——

Pier. Where ?

Ren. Bury'd in his heart.

Pier. Away ; we're yet all friends ;
No more of this, 'twill breed ill blood among us.

Spin.

Spin. Let us all draw our swords and search the house,
Pull him from the dark hole where he sits brooding
O'er his cold fears, and each man kill his share of him.

Pier. Who talks of killing; who's he'll shed the blood,
That's dear to me? Is't you? or you, Sir?

What not one speak? How you stand gaping all
On your grave oracle, your wooden god there!

Yet not a word! then, Sir, I'll tell y' a secret;

Suspicion's but at best a coward's virtue. [To Ren.]

Ren. A coward!—

[Handles his Sword.]

Pier. Put up thy sword, old man,
Thy hand shakes at it. Come, let's heal this breach;
I am too hot: we yet may all live friends.

Spin. Till we are safe, our friendship cannot be so.

Pier. Again! who's that?

Spin. 'Twas I.

Theod. And I.

Rev. And I.

Eli. And all.

Ren. Who are on my side?

Spin. Every honest sword.

Let's die like men, and not be sold like slaves.

Pier. One such word more, by heav'n I'll to the
senate,

And hang ye all like dogs, in clusters.

Why weep your coward swords half out their sheils?

Why do ye not all brandish them like mine?

You fear to die, and yet dare talk of killing.

Ren. Go to the senate and betray us! haste,

Secure thy wretched life: we fear to die

Less than thou dar'st be honest.

Pier. That's rank falshood;

Fear'st not thou death? Fy, there's a knavish itch
In that salt blood, an utter foe to smarting.

Had *Jaffier's* wife prov'd kind, he'd still been true.

Faugh—how that stinks?

Thou die! thou kill my friend, or thou, or thou,

With that lean, wither'd face!

Away;

Away ; disperse all to your several charges,
And meet to-morrow where your honour calls you ;
I'll bring that man, whose blood you so much thirst for,
And you shall see him venture for you fairly——
Hence, hence, I say. *[Exit Renault angrily.]*

Spin. I fear we have been to blame,
And done too much.

Thead. 'Twas too far urg'd against the man you
lov'd.

Rev. Here take our swords, and crush them with
your feet.

Spin. Forgive us, gallant friend.

Pier. Nay, now you've found
The way to melt, and cast me as you will :
I'll fetch this friend, and give him to your mercy :
Nay, he shall die, if you will take him from me.
For your repose, I'll quite my heart's best jewel ;
But would not have him torn away by villains,
A spiteful villainy.

Spin. No, may you both
For ever live, and fill the world with fame.

Pier. Now ye're too kind. Whence rose all this
discord ?

Oh ! what a dangerous precipice have we 'scap'd !
How near a fall was all we'd long been building !
What an eternal blot had stain'd our glories,
If one, the bravest and the best of men,
Had fall'n a sacrifice to rash suspicion,
Butcher'd by those whose cause he came to cherish !
O ! could you know him all, as I have known him,
How good he is, how just, how true, how brave,
You would not leave this place till you had seen him ;
Humbled yourselves before him, kiss'd his feet,
And gain'd remission for the worst of follies.

*Come but to-morrow, all your doubts shall end,
And to your loves me better recommend,
That I've preserv'd your fame, and sav'd my friend.* }

[Exeunt.]

ACT IV. SCENE I.

Enter JAFFIER and BELVIDERA.

JAFFIER.

WHERE dost thou lead me? every step I move
 Methinks I tread upon some mangled limb
 Of a rack'd friend: O my charming ruin!
 Where are we wandering?

Bel. To eternal honour.

You do a deed shall chronicle thy name,
 Among the glorious legends of those few,
 That have sav'd sinking nations: thy renown
 Shall be the future song of all the virgins,
 Who by thy piety have been preserv'd
 From horrid violation? Every street
 Shall be adorn'd with statues to thy honour,
 And at thy feet this great inscription written,
Remember him that propp'd the fall of Venice.

Jaff. Rather, remember him, who, after all
 The sacred bonds of oaths and holier friendship,
 In fond compassion to a woman's tears
 Forgot his manhood, virtue, truth, and honour,
 To sacrifice the bosom that reliev'd him.
 Why wilt thou damn me?

Bel. Oh! inconstant man!

How will you promise! how will you deceive!
 Do, return back, replace me in my bondage,
 Tell all thy friends how dang'rously thou lov'st me,
 And let thy dagger do its bloody office.
 Oh! that kind dagger, *Jaffier*, how 'twill look
 Struck thro' my heart, drench'd in my blood to th'
 hilt;

Whilst these poor dying eyes shall with their tears
 No more torment thee, then thou wilt be free:
 Or, if thou think'st it nobler, let me live,
 Till I'm a victim to the hateful lust

Of

Of that infernal devil, that old fiend,
That's damn'd himself, and would undo mankind.
Last night, my Love !

Jaff. Name it not again :
It shews a beastly image to my fancy,
Will wake me into madness. Oh ! the villain
That durst approach such purity as thine
On terms so vile : destruction, swift destruction,
Fall on my coward head, and make my name
The common scorn of fools, if I forgive him :
If I forgive him ! if I not revenge
With utmost rage, and most unstaying fury,
Thy suffering, thou dear darling of my life.

Belw. Delay no longer then, but to the Senate
And tell the dismall'st story ever utter'd :
Tell 'em what bloodshed, rapines, desolations,
Have been prepar'd : how near's the fatal hour.
Save thy poor country, save the reverend blood
Of all its nobles, which to-morrow's dawn
Must else see shed : save the poor tender lives
Of all those little infants, which the swords
Of murderers are whetting for this moment :
Think thou already hear'st their dying screams,
Think that thou see'st their sad distracted mothers
Kneeling before thy feet, and begging pity :
With torn dishavel'd hair, and streaming eyes :
Their naked mangled breasts besmear'd with blood ;
And even the milk, with which their fondled babes
Softly they hush'd, dropping in anguish from 'em :
Think thou see'st this, and then consult thy heart.

Jaff. Oh !

Belw. Think too, if you lose this present minute,
What miseries the next day brings upon thee.
Imagine all the horrors of that night ;
Murder and rapine, waste and desolation,
Confus'dly raging : think what then may prove
My lot ; the ravisher may then come safe,
And 'midst the terror of the public ruin
Do a damn'd deed ; perhaps may lay a train

To

To catch thy life : then where will be revenge,
The dear revenge that's due to such a wrong ?

Jaff. By all heav'n's powers, prophetic truth dwells
in thee,

For ev'ry word thou speak'st strikes thro' my heart,
Like a new light, and shews it how't has wander'd.
Just what th' hast made me, take me, *Belvidera*,
And lead me to the place where I'm to say
'This bitter lesson ; where I must betray
My truth, my virtue, constancy, and friends :
Must I betray my friend ? Ah ! take me quickly ;
Secure me well before that thought's renew'd ;
If I relapse once more, all's lost for ever.

Belv. Hast thou a friend more dear than *Belvidera* !

Jaff. No ; thou art my soul itself, wealth, friendship,
honour,

All present joys and earnest of all future
Are summ'd in thee : methinks when in thy arms,
'Thus leaning on thy breast one minute's more
'Then a long thousand years of vulgar hours.
Why was such happiness not given me pure ?
Why dash'd with cruel wrongs, and bitter warnings ?
Come, lead me forward now like a tame lamb
To sacrifice. Thus, in his fatal garlands
Deck'd fine and pleas'd, the wanton skips and plays,
Trots by th' enticing flatt'ring priestess' side,
And, much transported with its little pride,
Forgets his dear companions of the plain
'Till by her bound, he's on the altar lain,
Yet then too hardly bleats, such pleasure's in the pain. }

Enter Officer and six Guards.

Offi. Stand, who goes there ?

Belv. Friends.

Jaff. Friends, *Belvidera* ? hide me from my friend ;
By heav'n, I'd rather see the face of hell,
Than meet the man I love.

Offi. But what friends are you ?

Jaff. Friends to the Senate and the state of *Venice*.

Offi.

Offi. My orders are to seize on all I find
At this late hour, and bring 'em to the council,
Who are now sitting.

Jaff. Sir, you shall be obey'd.
Hold, brute, stand off, none of your paws upon me.
Now the lot's cast, and fate do what thou wilt.
[*Exeunt guarded.*]

S C E N E II. *the Senate-house.*

*Where appear sitting the Duke of Venice, Priuli,
Antonio, and eight other Senators.*

Duke. Antony, Priuli, Senators of Venice,
Speak, why are we assembled here this night ;
What have you to inform us of, concerns
The state of *Venice*, honour or its safety ?

Pri. Could words express the story I've to tell you,
Fathers, these tears were useless, these sad tears
That fall from my old eyes ; but there is cause
We all should weep, tear off these purple robes,
And wrap ourselves in sackcloth, sitting down,
On the sad earth, and cry aloud to heav'n :
Heav'n knows if yet there be an hour to come,
E're *Venice* be no more.

All Sen. How !

Pri. Nay, we stand
Upon the very brink of gaping ruin.
Within this city's form'd a dark conspiracy
To massacre us all, our wives and children,
Kindred and friends, our palaces and temples
To lay in ashes : nay, the hour too fix'd ;
The swords, for ought I know, drawn e'en this moment,
And the wild waste begun. From unknown hands
I had this warning : but, if we are men,
Let's not be tamely butcher'd, but do something
That may inform the world in after-ages,

Our

Our virtue was not ruin'd, tho' we were.

[A noise without.]

Room, room, make room for some prisoners——
Sen. Let's raise the city.

Enter OFFICER and GUARDS.

Pri. Speak there, what disturbance?

Off. Two pris'ners have the guards seiz'd in the streets,
 Who say they come t' inform this rev'rend Senate
 About the present danger.

Enter JAFFIER and BELVIDERA guarded.

All. Give 'em entrance——Well, who are you?

Jaff. A villain.

Ant. Short and pithy:

The man speaks well.

Jaff. Would every man, that hears me,
 Would deal so honestly, and own his title.

Duke. 'Tis rumour'd, that a plot has been contriv'd
 Against this state; that you have a share in't too.
 If you are a villain, to redeem your honour,
 Unfold the truth, and be restor'd with mercy.

Jaff. Think not that I, to save my life came hither;
 I know its value better; but in pity
 To all those wretches, whose unhappy dooms
 Are fix'd and seal'd. You see me here before you,
 The sworn and covenanted foe of *Venice*:
 But use me as my dealings may deserve,
 And I may prove a friend.

Duke. The slave capitulates;
 Give him the tortures.

Jaff. That you dare not do,
 Your fear won't let you, nor the longing itch
 To hear a story which you dread the truth of:
 Truth, which the fear of smart shall ne'er get from me.
 Cowards are scar'd with threatnings; boys are whipt
 Into confessions: but a steady mind
 Acts of itself, ne'er asks the body counsel.
 Give him the tortures! name but such a thing

Again,

Again, by heav'n I'll shut these lips for ever.
Not all your racks, your engines, or your wheels,
Shall force a groan away, that you may guess at.

Ant. A bloody-minded fellow I'll warrant ;
A damn'd bloody-minded fellow.

Duke. Name your conditions.

Jaff. For myself full pardon,
Besides the life of two and twenty friends,

[*Delivers a List.*

Whose names are here enroll'd : nay, let their crimes
Be ne'er so monstrous, I must have the oaths
And sacred promise of this reverend council,
That in a full assembly of the Senate
The thing I ask be ratify'd. Swear this,
And I'll unfold the secret of your danger.

All. We'll swear.

Duke. Propose the oath.

Jaff. By all, the hopes
You have of peace and happiness hereafter.
Swear.

All. We all swear.

Jaff. To grant me what I've ask'd,
Ye swear ?

All. We swear.

Jaff. And, as ye keep the oath,
May you and your posterity be bless'd,
Or curs'd for ever.

All. Else be curs'd for ever.

Jaff. Then here's the list, and with't the full disclose
Of all that threatens you, [*Delivers another Paper.*
Now, fate, thou haste caught me.

Ant. Why, what a dreadful catalogue of cut throats
Is hear ! I'll warrant you not one of these fellows but
has a face like a lion. I dare not so much as read their
names over.

Duke. Give order, that all diligent search be made
To seize these men ; their characters are public.
The paper intimates their rendezvous
To be at the house of the fam'd *Grecian* Courtezan,
Call'd *Aquilina* ; see the place secur'd.

You,

You, *Jaffier*, must with patience bear till morning
To be our prisoner.

Jaff. Would the chains of death
Had bound me safe, e'er I had known this minute.
I've done a deed will make my story hereafter
Quoted in competition with all ill ones :
The story of my wickedness shall run
Down thro' the low traditions of the vulgar,
And boys be taught to tell the tale of *Jaffier*.

Duke. Captain, withdraw your prisoner.

Jaff. Sir, if possible,
Lead me where my own thoughts themselves may lose
me ;

Where I may doze out what I've left of life,
Forget myself, and this day's guilt and falsehood.
Cruel remembrance, how shall I appease thee !

[*Ex. guarded. Noise without.*]

More traitors ; Room, room, make room there.

Duke. How's this, guards ?

Where are our guards ? Shut up the gates, the treason's
Already at our doors.

[*Enter Officer.*]

Off. My Lords, more traitors
Seiz'd in the very act of consultation :
Furnish'd with arms and instruments of mischief.
Bring in the prisoners.

Enter PIERRE, RENAULT, THEODORE, ELIOT, RE-
VELLIDO, and other Conspirators in fetters.

Pier. You, my lords and fathers
(As you are pleas'd to call yourselves) of *Venice* ;
If you sit here to guide the court of justice,
Why these disgraceful chains upon the limbs
That have so often labour'd in your service ?
Are these the wreaths of triumph ye bestow
On those, that bring you conquests home, and honours ?

Duke. Go on ; you shall be heard, Sir,

Ant. And be hang'd too I hope.

Pier. Are these the trophies I've deserv'd for fighting
Your battles with confederated powers ?

When

When winds and seas conspir'd to overthrow you ;
And brought the fleets of *Spain* to your own harbours ;
When you, great Duke, shrunk trembling in your palace,

And saw your wife, the *Adriatic*, plough'd
Like a leud whore by bolder prows than yours ;
Stepp'd not I forth, and taught your loose *Venetians*
The task of honour, and the way of greatness ?
Rais'd you from your capitulating fears,
To stipulate the terms of su'd-for peace ?
And this my recompence ! If I'm a traytor,
Produce my charge ; or shew the wretch that's base enough,

And brave enough, to tell me I'm a traitor.

Duke. Know you one *Jaffier* !

[*All the Conspirators murmur.*]

Pier. Yes, and know his virtue,
His justice, truth, his general worth, and sufferings
From a hard father, taught me first to love him.

Enter JAFFIER guarded.

Duke. See him brought forth.

Pier. My friend too bound ! nay then
Our fate has conquer'd us, and we fall.
Why droops the man whose welfare's so much mine ?
They're but one thing. These rev'rend tyrants, *Jaffier*,
Call us traytors : art thou one, my brother ?

Jaff. To thee I am the falsest, veriest, slave
That e'er betray'd a generous trusting friend,
And gave up honour to be sure of ruin.
All our fair hopes, which morning was t' have crown'd,
Has this curs'd tongue o'erthrown.

Pier. So, then all's over ;
Venice has lost her freedom, I my life ;
No more ; farewell.

Duke. Say ; will you make confession
Of your vile deeds, and trust the senate's mercy ?

Pier. Curs'd be your senate ; curs'd your constitution :

H

The

The curse of growing factions and divisions
Still vex your councils, shake your public safety,
And make the robes of government you wear
Hateful to you, as these base chains to me.

Duke. Pardon, or death!

Pier. Death, honourable death!

Ren. Death's the best thing we ask, or you can give.

All Consp. No shameful bonds, but honourable death.

Duke. Break up the council: Captain, guard your prisoners.

Jaffier, you're free, but these must wait for judgment.

[*Ex. all the Senators.*]

Pier. Come, where's my dungeon? lead me to my straw:

It will not be the first time I have lodg'd hard
To do the senate service.

Jaff. Hold one moment.

Pier. Who's he disputes the judgment of the senate?
Presumptuous rebel—on—

[*Strikes Jaff.*]

Jaff. By heav'n you stir not,
I must be heard, I must have leave to speak:
Thou hast disgrac'd me, *Pierre*, by a vile blow:
Had not a dagger done thee nobler justice?
But use me as thou wilt, thou can'st not wrong me,
For I am fallen beneath the basest injuries:
Yet look upon me with an eye of mercy,
With pity and with charity behold me;
Shut not thy heart against a friend's repentance;
But, as there dwells a godlike nature in thee,
Listen with mildness to my supplications.

Pier. What whining monk art thou? what holy cheat,

That would'st inroach upon my credulous ears,
And can'st thus vilely? Hence! I know thee not;
Dissemble and be nasty: leave me, hypocrite.

Jaff. Not know me, *Pierre*!

Pier. No, know thee not; what art thou?

Jaff.

Jaff. *Jaffier*, thy friend, thy once lov'd, valued friend!

Tho' now deserv'dly scorn'd and us'd most hardly.

Pier. Thou *Jaffier*! thou my once lov'd valu'd friend!

By heav'ns thou ly'st: the man so call'd, my friend,
Was generous, honest, faithful, just and valiant,
Noble in mind, and in his person lovely,
Dear to my eyes, and tender to my heart:
But thou, a wretched, base, false, worthless coward,
Poor even in soul, and loathsome in thy aspect:
All eyes must shun thee, and all hearts detest thee.
Prithee avoid, no longer cling thus round me,
Like something baneful, that my nature's chill'd at.

Jaff. I have not wrong'd thee, by these tears I have not,

But still am honest, true, and hope too valiant;
My mind still full of thee, therefore still noble.
Let not thy eyes then shun me, nor thy heart
Detest me utterly: Oh! look upon me,
Look back and see my sad, sincere submission!
How my heart swells, as even 'twould burst my bosom:

Fond of its goal, and labouring to be at thee;
What shall I do? what say to make thee hear me?

Pier. Hast thou not wrong'd me? dar'st thou call thyself

That once lov'd, valued friend of mine,
And swear thou hast not wrong'd me? Whence these chains?

Whence the vile death which I may meet this moment?
Whence this dishonour, but from thee thou false one?

Jaff. All's true; yet grant one thing, and I've done asking.

Pier. What's that?

Jaff. To take thy life on such conditions
The council have propos'd: thou and thy friends
May yet live long, and to be better treated.

Pier. Life! ask my life! confess! record myself

A villain for the privilege to breathe,
 And carry up and down this curst city
 A discontented and repining spirit,
 Burdensome to itself, a few years longer,
 To lose it, may be, at last in a lewd quarrel
 For some new friend, treacherous and false as thou art!
 No, this vile world and I have long been jangling,
 And cannot part on better terms than now,
 When only men like thee are fit to live in't.

Jaff. By all that's just——

Pier. Swear by some other powers,
 For thou hast broke that sacred oath too lately.

Jaff. Then by that hell I merit, I'll not leave thee,
 Till to thyself at least thou'rt reconcil'd,
 However thy resentment deal with me.

Pier. Not leave me!

Jaff. No; thou shalt not force me from thee:
 Use me reproachfully, and like a slave;
 Tread on me, buffet me, heap wrongs on wrongs
 On my poor head; I'll bear it all with patience
 Shall weary out thy most unfriendly cruelty:
 Lie at thy feet and kiss 'em, tho' they spurn me,
 Till wounded by my sufferings thou relent,
 And raise me to thy arms with dear forgiveness.

Pier. Art thou not——

Jaff. What?

Pier. A traitor?

Jaff. Yes.

Pier. A villain.

Jaff. Granted.

Pier. A coward, a most scandalous coward,
 Spiritless, void of honour, one who has sold
 Thy everlasting fame for shameless life?

Jaff. All, all, and more, much more: my faults
 . are numberless.

Pier. And would'st thou have me live on terms like
 thine?

Base as thou'rt false——

Jaff. No; 'tis to me that's granted:

The

The safety of thy life was all I aim'd at
In recompense for faith and trust so broken.

Pier. I scorn it more, because preserv'd by thee :
And as when first my foolish heart took pity
On thy misfortunes, fought thee in thy miseries,
Reliev'd thy wants, and rais'd thee from thy state
Of wretchedness, in which thy fate had plung'd thee,
To rank thee in my list of noble friends ;
All I receiv'd, in surety for thy truth,
Were unregarded oaths, and this, this dagger,
Given with a worthless pledge thou since hast stol'n.
So I restore it back to thee again ;
Swearing by all those powers which thou hast violated,
Never from this curs'd hour to hold communion,
Friendship, or interest with thee, tho' our years
Were to exceed those limited the world.
Take it——Farewel——for now I owe thee nothing.

Jaff. Say thou wilt live then.

Pier. For my life, dispose it
Just as thou wilt, because 'tis what I'm tir'd with.

Jaff. Oh *Pierre* !

Pier. No more.

Jaff. My eyes won't lose the sight of thee,
But languish after thine, and ake with gazing.

Pier. Leave me—Nay, then thus, thus I throw thee
from me ;

And curses great as is thy falshood catch thee. [*Exit.*

Jaff. Amen.

He's gone, my father, friend, preserver,
And here's the portion he has left me,

[*Holds the Dagger up.*

This dagger : well remember'd, with this dagger
I gave a solemn vow of dire importance ;
Parted with this and *Belvidera* together.
Have a care, mem'ry drive that thought no farther ;
No, I'll esteem it as a friend's last legacy,
Treasure it up within this wretched bosom,
Where it may grow acquainted with my heart,
That, when they meet, they start not from each other.

So,

So, now for thinking : a blow, call'd traitor, villain,
 Coward, dishonourable coward, fough !
 Oh ! for a long sound sleep, and so forget it ?
 Down, busy devil.

Enter BELVIDERA.

Bel. Whither shall I fly ?
 Where hide me and my miseries together ?
 Where's now the *Roman* constancy I boasted ?
 Sunk into trembling fears and desperation.
 Not daring now to look to that dear face
 Which us'd to smile, even on my faults, but, down
 Bending these miserable eyes to earth,
 Must move in penance and implore much mercy.
Jaff. Mercy ! kind heav'n has surely endless stores
 Hoarded for thee, blessings yet untasted :
 Let wretches, loaded hard with guilt, as I am,
 Bow with the weight, and groan beneath the burden,
 Creep with a remnant of that strength th' have left
 Before the footstool of that heaven th' have injur'd.
 Oh ! *Belvidera* ! I'm the wretched'st creature
 E'er crawl'd on earth : now, if thou'ast virtue, help me,
 Take me into thy arms, and speak the words of peace
 To my divided soul, that wars within me,
 And raises every sense to my confusion :
 By heav'n I'm tottering on the very brink
 Of peace ; and thou art all the hold I've left.

Bel. Alas ! I know thy sorrows are most mighty :
 I know th'hast cause to mourn, to mourn, my *Jaffier*,
 With endless cries, and never-ceasing wailing ;
 Thou'ast lost——

Jaff. Oh ! I've lost what can't be counted ;
 My friend too, *Belvidera*, that dear friend,
 Who next to thee was all my health rejoic'd in,
 Has us'd me like a slave, shamefully us'd me :
 'Twould break thy pitying heart to hear the story.
 What shall I do ? Resentment, indignation,
 Love, pity, fear, and mem'ry how I've wrong'd him,
Distract

Distract my quiet with the very thought on't,
And tear my heart to pieces in my bosom.

Bel. What has he done ?

Jaff. Thou'dst hate me, should I tell thee.

Bel. Why ?

Jaff. Oh ! he has us'd me ! yet by heav'n I bear it;
He has us'd me, *Belvidera* ! But first swear
That, when I've told thee, thou wilt not loath me ut-
terly,

Tho' vilest blots and stains appear upon me ;
But still at least with charitable goodness
Be near me in the pangs of my affliction ;
Nor scorn me, *Belvidera*, as he has done.

Bel. Have I then e'er been false, that now I'm
doubted ?

Speak, what's the cause, I'm grown into distrust ?
Why thought unfit to hear my Love's complaining ?

Jaff. Oh !

Bel. Tell me.

Jaff. Bear my failings, for they're many,
Oh ! my dear Angel ! in that friend I've lost
All my soul's peace ; for every thought of him
Strikes my sense hard, and dead's it in my brains ;
Would'st thou believe it ?

Bel. Speak.

Jaff. Before we parted,
E're yet his guards had led him to his prison,
Full of severest sorrows for his sufferings,
With eyes o'erflowing, and a bleeding heart,
Humbling myself almost beneath my nature,
As at his feet I kneel'd, and su'd for mercy ;
Forgetting all our friendship, all the dearneſs
In which we've liv'd so many years together,
With a reproachful hand he dash'd a blow :
He struck me, *Belvidera*, by heav'n he struck me !
Buffeted, call'd me traitor, villain, coward.
Am I a coward ? Am I a villain ? tell me :
Th'art the best judge, and mad'st me, if I am so.
Damnation ! coward !

Bel.

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Am I a coward ? Am I a villain ? tell me :
Th'art the best judge, and mad'st me, if I am so.
Damnation ! coward !

Bel.

Bel. Oh! forgive me, *Jaffier*;
And, if his sufferings wound thy heart already,
What will they do to-morrow?

Jaff. Hah!

Bel. To-morrow,
When thou shalt see him stretch'd in all the agonies
Of a tormenting and a shameful death;
His bleeding bowels, and his broken limbs,
Insulted o'er by a vile butchering villain,
What will thy heart do then! Oh! sure 'twill stream
Like my eyes now.

Jaff. What means thy dreadful story?
Death, and to-morrow? Broken limbs and bowels?
Insulted o'er by a vile butchering villain?
By all my fears I shall start out to madness
With bravely guessing, if the truth's hid longer.

Bel. The faithful senators, 'tis the've decree'd it:
They say according to our friends request,
They shall have death, and no ignoble bondage:
Declare their promis'd mercy all as forfeited:
False to their oaths, and deaf to intercession:
Warrants are pass'd for public death to-morrow.

Jaff. Death! doom'd to die! condemn'd unhear'd!
unpleaded!

Bel. Nay, cruel'st racks and torments are preparing
To force compassion from their dying pangs.
Oh! do not look so terribly upon me!
How your lips shake, and all your face disorder'd!
What means my Love?

Jaff. Leave me, I charge thee leave me——strong
temptations
Wake in my heart.

Bel. For what?

Jaff. No more, but leave me.

Bel. Why?

Jaff. Oh! by heav'n I love thee with that fondness,
I would not have thee stay a moment longer,

Near

Near these curs'd hands : are they not cold upon thee ?

*[Pulls the Dagger half out of his bosom,
and puts it back again.]*

Bel. No, everlasting comfort's in thy arms.

To lean thus on thy breast is softer ease,
Than downy pillows deck'd on leaves of roses.

Jaff. Alas ! thou think'st not of the thorns 'tis fill'd
with :

Fly, ere they gaul thee : there's a lurking serpent
Ready to leap, and sting thee to the heart :
Art thou not terrify'd ?

Bel. No.

Jaff. Call to mind.

What thou hast done, and whither thou hast brought me.

Bel. Hah !

Jaff. Where's my friend ? my friend thou smiling
mischief ?

Nay shrink not, now 'tis too late ; thou should'st have fled
When thy guilt first had cause ; for dire revenge
Is up, and raging for my friend. He groans !
Hark how he groans ! his screams are in my ears
Already ; see, they fix'd him on the wheel,
And now they tear him——Murder ! perjurd senate !
Murder——oh !——hark thee, traitress, thou hast done this ;
Thanks to thy tears, and false persuading love.
How her eyes speak ! O thou bewitching creature !

[Fumbling for his Dagger.]

Madness can't hurt thee : come thou little trembler,
Creep even into my heart, and there lie safe ;
'Tis thy own citadel ——hah——yet stand off.
Heav'n must have justice, and my broken vows
Will sink me else beneath its reaching mercy.
I'll wink, and then 'tis done——

Bel. What means the lord

Of me, my life and love ? What's in thy bosom,
Thou grasp'st at so ? Nay, why am I thus treated ?

[Draws the Dagger, offers to stab her.]

What wilt thou do ? Ah ! do not kill me, *Jaffier* :

Pity these panting breasts, and trembling limbs,

I

That

That us'd to clasp thee when thy looks were milder,
That yet hang heavy on my unpurg'd soul ;
And plunge it not into eternal darknes.

Jaff. Know, *Belvidera*, when we parted last,
I gave this dagger with thee, as in trust
To be thy portion, if I e'er prov'd false.
On such condition was my truth believ'd :
But now 'tis forfeited, and must be paid for.

[Offers to stab her again.

Bel. Oh ! mercy !

[Kneeling.

Jaff. Nay, no struggling.

Bel. Now then kill me,

[Leaps upon his Neck, and kisses him.

While thus I cling about thy cruel neck,
Kiss thy revengeful lips, and die in joys
Greater than any I can guess hereafter.

Jaff. I am, I am a coward, witness't heav'n,
Witness it, earth, and ev'ry being witness :
'Tis but one blow ! yet my immortal Love,
I cannot longer bear a thought to harm thee.

[He throws away the Dagger, and embraces her.

The seal of providence is sure upon thee ;
And thou wert born for yet unheard-of wonders :
O ! thou wert either born to save or damn me.
By all the power that's given thee o'er my soul,
By thy resistless tears and conquering smiles,
By the victorious love that still waits on thee ;
Fly to thy cruel father, save my friend,
Or all our future quiet's lost for ever.
Fall at his feet, cling round his reverend knees :
Speak to him with thy eyes, and with thy tears
Melt his hard heart, and wake dead nature in him,
Crush him in th' arms, torture him with thy softness ;

*Nor, till thy prayers are granted, set him free,
But conquer him as thou hast conquer'd me.* *[Ex.*

A C T

ACT V. SCENE I.

Enter PRIULI solus.

PRIULI.

WHY, cruel heav'n, have my unhappy days
Been lengthen'd to this sad one? Oh? disho-
nour

And deathless infamy is fall'n upon me.
Was it my fault? Am I a traitor? No.
But then, my only child, my daughter wedded;
There my best blood runs foul, and a disease.
Incurable has seiz'd upon my memory
To make it rot and stink to after-ages.
Curs'd be the fatal minute when I got her;
Or would that I'd been any thing but man,
And rais'd an issue which would ne'er have wrong'd me.
The miserablest creatures (man excepted)
Are not the less esteem'd, tho' their posterity
Degenerate from the virtues of their fathers:
The vilest beasts are happy in their offsprings,
While only man gets traitors, whores, and villains.
Curs'd be the name, and some swift blow from fate
Lay his head deep, where mine may be forgotten.

Enter BELVIDERA in a long mourning Veil.

Belv. He's there, my father, my inhuman father,
That for three years has left an only child
Expos'd to all the outrages of fate,
And cruel ruin! —oh!

Pri. What child of sorrow
Art thou, that com'st wrapt up in weeds of sadness,
And mov'st as if thy steps were towards a grave?

Belv. A wretch, who from the very top of hap-
piness,
Am fallen into the lowest depths of misery,
And want your pitying hand to raise me up again.

Pri.

Pri. Indeed thou talk'st as thou hadst tasted sorrows!
Would I could help thee.

Belv. 'Tis greatly in your power :
The world too speaks you charitable ; and I,
Who ne'er ask'd alms before, in that dear hope,
Am come a begging to you, Sir.

Pri. For what ?

Belv. Oh ! well regard me, is this voice a strange
one ?

Consider too, when beggars once pretend
A case like mine, no little will content 'em.

Pri. What would'st thou beg for ?

Belv. Pity and forgiveness. [*Throws up her veil.*]
By the kind tender names of child and father,
Hear my complaints, and take me to your love.

Pri. My daughter !

Bel. Yes, your daughter, by a mother
Virtuous and noble, faithful to your honour,
Obedient to your will, kind to your wishes,
Dear to your arms. By all the joys she gave you,
When in her blooming years she was your treasure,
Look kindly on me ; in my face behold
The lineaments of her's you've kiss'd so often,
Pleading the cause of your poor cast-off child.

Pri. Thou art my daughter.

Bel. Yes——and you've oft told me,
With smiles of love and chaste paternal kisses,
I'd much resemblance of my mother.

Pri. Oh !

Hadst thou inherited her matchless virtues,
I'd too been blest'd.

Bel. Nay, do not call to memory
My disobedience, but let pity enter
Into your heart, and quite deface the impression.
For could you think how mine's perplex'd, what sad-
ness,

Fears and despairs, distract the peace within me ;
Oh ! you would take me into your dear, dear arms,

Hover

Hover with strong compassion o'er your young one,
To shelter me with a protecting wing
From the black gather'd storm, that's just, just break-
ing.

Pri. Don't talk thus.

Bel. Yes, I must; and you must hear too,
I have a husband.

Pri. Damn him.

Bel. Oh! do not curse him;
He would not speak so hard a word towards you
On any terms, howe'er he deal with me.

Pri. Ha! what means my child?

Bel. Oh! there's but this short moment
'Twixt me and fate: yet send me not with curses
Down to my grave; afford me one kind blessing
Before we part: just take me in your arms,
And recommend me with a prayer to heav'n,
That I may die in peace; and when I'm dead——

Pri. How my soul's catch'd!

Bel. Lay me, I beg you, lay me
By the dear ashes of my tender mother:
She would have pitied me, had fate yet spar'd her.

Pri. By heav'n, my aking heart forebodes much mis-
chief.

Tell me thy story, for I'm still thy father.

Bel. No. I'm still contented.

Pri. Speak.

Bel. No matter.

Pri. Tell me.

By yon blest'd heav'n, my heart runs o'er with fondness.

Bel. Oh!

Pri. Utter't.

Bel. Oh! my husband, my dear husband,
Carries a dagger in his once kind bosom
To pierce the heart of your poor *Belvidera*.

Pri. Kill thee!

Bel. Yes, kill me. When he pass'd his faith
And covenant against your state and senate,
He gave me up as hostage for his truth:

With

With me a dagger, and a dire commission,
Whene'er he fail'd, to plunge it thro' this bosom.
I learn'd the danger, chose the hour of love
T'attempt his heart and bring it back to honour:
Great love prevail'd, and bless'd me with success;
He came, confess'd, betray'd his dearest friends
For promis'd mercy. Now they're doom'd to suffer,
Gall'd with remembrance of what then was sworn,
If they are lost, he vows t'appease the gods
With this poor life, and make my blood th' atone-
ment.

Pri. Heav'ns !

Bel. Think you saw what pass'd at our last parting :
Think you beheld him like a raging lion,
Pacing the earth, and tearing up his steps,
Fate in his eyes, and roaring with the pain
Of burning fury : think you saw his one hand
Fix'd on my throat, whilst the extended other
Grasp'd a keen threat'ning dagger ; Oh ! 'twas thus
We last embrac'd, when, trembling, with revenge,
He dragg'd me to the ground, and at my bosom
Presented horrid death ; cry'd out, My friends,
Where are my friends ? swore, wept, rag'd, threaten'd,
lov'd,

For he yet lov'd, and that dear love preserv'd me
To this last trial of a father's pity.
I fear not death, but cannot bear a thought
That that dear hand should do th' unfriendly office.
If I was ever then your care, now hear me ;
Fly to the senate, save the promis'd lives
Of his dear friends, e're mine be made the sacrifice.

Pri. Oh ! my heart's comfort !

Bel. Will you not, my father?
Weep not, but answer me.

Pri. By heav'n I will.
Not one of 'em but what shall be immortal.
Canst thou forgive me all my follies past,
I'll henceforth be indeed a father; never,
Never more thus expose, but cherish thee,

Dear

Dear as the vital warmth that feeds my life,
Dear as these eyes that weep in fondness o'er thee :
Peace to thy heart. Farewel.

Bel. Go, and remember
'Tis *Belvidera's* life her father pleads for.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

Enter JAFFIER.

Jaff. Final destruction seize on all the world,
Bend down, ye heav'ns, and, shutting round this earth,
Crush the vile globe into its first confusion ;
Scorch it with elemental flames to one curs'd cinder,
And all us little creepers in't call'd men
Burn, burn to nothing : but let *Venice* burn
Hotter than all the rest : here kindle hell,
Ne'er to extinguish ; and let souls hereafter
Groan here in all those pains, which mine feels now.

Enter BELVIDERA.

Bel. My Life——

[*Meeting him.*]

Jaff. My Plague——

[*Turning from her.*]

Bel. Nay, then I see my ruin :
If I must die !

Jaff. No, death's this day too busy :
Thy father's ill-tim'd mercy came too late.
I thank thee for thy labours-tho', and him too :
But all my poor betray'd unhappy friends
Have summons to prepare for fate's black hour ;
And yet I live.

Bel. Then be the next my doom ;
I see thou'ast pass'd my sentence in thy heart,
And I'll no longer weep or plead against it,
But with the humblest, most obedient patience
Meet thy dear hands, and kiss 'em when they wound
me.

Indeed I am willing, but I beg thee do it
With some remorse ; and when thou giv'st the blow,
View me with eyes of a relenting love,
And shew me pity, for 'twill sweeten justice.

Jaff.

Jaff. Shew pity to thee?

Bel. Yes, and when thy hands,
Charg'd with my fate, come trembling to the deed,
As thou hast done a thousand thousand dear times
To this poor breast, when kinder rage hath brought
thee,

When our stung hearts have leap'd to meet each other,
And melting kisses seal'd our lips together;
When joys have left me gasping in thy arms:
So let my death come now, and I'll not shrink from't,

Jaff. Nay, *Belvidera*, do not fear my cruelty,
Nor let the thoughts of death perplex thy fancy;
But answer me to what I shall demand,
With a firm temper and unshaken spirit.

Bel. I will when I've done weeping——

Jaff. Fy, no more on't——
How long is't since that miserable day
We wedded first?

Bel. Oh! h h!

Jaff. Nay, keep in thy tears,
Lest they unman me too.

Bel. Heav'n knows I cannot;
The words you utter sound so very sadly,
The streams will follow——

Jaff. Come I'll kiss 'em dry then.

Bel. But was't a miserable day?

Jaff. A curs'd one.

Bel. I thought it otherways; and you've oft sworn,
In the transporting hours of warmest love,
When sure you spoke the truth, you've sworn you
blest'd it.

Jaff. 'Twas a rash oath.

Bel. Then why am I not curs'd too?

Saff. No, *Belvidera*, by th' eternal truth,
I doat with too much fondness.

Bel. Still so kind!

Still then do you love me?

Jaff. Nature, in her workings,
Inclines not with more ardor to creation,

Than

Than I do now towards thee : man ne'er was blest'd,
Since the first pair met, as I have been.

Belv. Then sure you will not curse me ?

Jaff. No, I'll bless thee.

I came on purpose, *Belvidera*, to bless thee.

'Tis now, I think, three years, we've liv'd together.

Bel. And may no fatal minute ever part us,
Till reverend grown for age and love, we go
Down to one grave, as our last bed together ;
There sleep in peace, till an eternal morning.

Jaff. When will that be ? [Sighing.]

Bel. I hope long ages hence.

Jaff. Have I not hitherto (I beg thee tell me
Thy very fears) us'd thee with tender't love ?
Did e'er my soul rise up in wrath against thee ?
Did I e'er frown, when *Belvidera* smil'd ?
Or, by the least unfriendly word betray
Abating passion ? Have I ever wrong'd thee ?

Bel. No.

Jaff. Has my heart, or have my eyes e'er wander'd
To any other woman ?

Bel. Never, never—I were the worst of false ones,
should I accuse thee.

I own I've been too happy, blest'd above
My sex's charter.

Jaff. Did I not say I came to bless thee ?

Bel. Yes.

Jaff. Then hear me, bounteous heav'n ;
Pour down your blessings on this beauteous head,
Where everlasting sweets are always springing,
With a continual giving hand : let peace,
Honour, and safety always hover round her ;
Feed her with plenty, let her eyes ne'er see
A sight of sorrow, nor her heart know mourning :
Crown all her days with joy, her nights with rest,
Harmless as her own thoughts ; and prop her virtue
To bear the loss of one that too much lov'd ;
And comfort her with patience in our parting.

Bel. How, parting, parting !

K

Jaff.

Jaff. Yes, for ever parting !
 I have sworn, *Belvidera*, by yon heav'n,
 That best can tell how much I lose, to leave thee,
 We part this hour for ever.

Bel. Oh ! call back
 Your cruel blessing ; stay with me and curse me !

Jaff. No, 'tis resolv'd.

Bel. Then hear me too, just heav'n :
 Pour down your curses on this wretched head
 With never ceasing vengeance ; let despair,
 Danger, and infamy, nay all, surround me ;
 Starve me with wantings ; let my eyes ne'er see
 A sight of comfort, nor my heart know peace,
 But dash my days with sorrow, nights with horrors
 Wild as my own thoughts now, and let loose fury
 To make me mad enough for what I lose,
 If I must lose him. If I must ? I will not.
 Oh ! turn and hear me !

Jaff. Now hold heart, or never.

Bel. By all the tender days we've liv'd together,
 By all our charming nights and joys that crown'd 'em,
 Pity my sad condition ; speak, but speak.

Jaff. Oh ! h h !

Bel. By these arms that now cling round thy neck,
 By this dear kiss, and by ten thousand more,
 By these poor streaming eyes——

Jaff. Murder ! unhold me :
 By the immortal destiny that doom'd me

[*Draws his Dagger.*

To this curs'd minute, I'll not live one longer ;
 Resolve to let me go, or see me fall——

Bel. Hold, Sir, be patient.

Jaff. Hark, the dismal bell [Passing-bell tolls.
 Tolls out for death ! I must attend its call too ;
 For my poor friend, my dying *Pierre*, expects me ;
 He sent a message to require I'd see him
 Before he dy'd, and take his last forgiveness.
 Farewell, for ever.

Bel.

Bel. Leave thy dagger with me.
Bequeath me something——Not one kiss at parting ;
Oh ! my poor heart, when wilt thou break ?

[Going out, looks back at her.]

Jaff. Yet stay.

We have a child as yet a tender infant ;
Be a kind mother to him when I am gone.
Breed him in virtue and the paths of honour,
But never let him know his father's story ;
I charge thee guard him from the wrongs my fate
May do his future fortune, or his name.
Now——nearer yet—— *[Approaching each other.]*
Oh ! that my arms were riveted
Thus round thee ever ! But my friends ! my oath !
This, and no more. *[Kisses her.]*

Bel. Another, sure another,
For that poor little one you've ta'en such care of,
I'll giv't him truly.

Jaff. So now farewell.

Bel. For ever ?

Jaff. Heav'n knows for ever ; all good angels guard
thee. *[Exit.]*

Bel. All ill ones sure had charge of me this moment.
Curs'd be my days, and doubly curs'd my nights,
Which I must now mourn out in widow'd tears ;
Blasted be every herb, and fruit, and tree ;
Curs'd be the rain that falls upon the earth,
And may the general curse reach man and beast ;
Oh ! give me daggers, fire or water :
How I could bleed, how burn, how drown, the waves
Huzzing and foming round my sinking head,
Till I descended to the peaceful bottom !
Oh ! there's all quiet, here all rage and fury :
The air's too thin, and pierces my weak brain ;
I long for thick substantial sleep : hell ! hell !
Burst from the center, rage and roar aloud,
If thou art half so hot, so mad as I am,

Enter

Enter PRIULI and Servants.

Who's there ?

[They seize her.]

Pri. Run, seize and bring her safely home,
Guard her as you would do life : alas, poor creature !

Bel. What to my husband ? then conduct me quickly ;
Are all things ready ? shall we die most gloriously ?

Say not a word of this to my old father :

Murmuring streams, soft shades, and springing flowers,
Lutes, laurels, seas of milk, and ships of amber. *[Ex.]*

S C E N E *opening discovers a Scaffold, and a
Wheel prepar'd for the executing of PIERRE ; then
enter OFFICERS, PIERRE and Guards, a FRI-
AR, Executioner, and a great rabble.*

Offi. Room, room there—stand all by, make room
for the prisoner.

Pier. My friend not yet come ?

Friar. Why are you so obstinate ?

Pier. Why you so troublesome, that a poor wretch
can't die in peace,

But you, like ravens, will be croaking round him ?—

Friar. Yet heav'n—

Pier. I tell thee, heav'n and I are friends :

I ne'er broke peace with't yet by cruel murders,

Rapine or perjury, or vile deceiving :

But liv'd in moral justice towards all men ;

Nor am a foe to the most strong believers,

Howe'er my own short sighted faith confines me.

Friar. But an all-seeing judge—

Pier. You say my conscience

Must be my accuser : I have search'd that conscience,

And find no records there of crimes that scare me.

Friar. 'Tis strange you should want faith.

Pier. You want to lead

My reason blind-fold, like a hamper'd lion,

Check'd of its nobler vigour ; then when bated

Down to obedient tameness, make it couch,

And shew strange tricks, which you call signs of faith.

So

So silly souls are gull'd, and you get money.
Away ; no more : Captain, I'd have hereafter
This fellow write no lyes of my conversion,
Because he has crept upon my troubled hours.

Enter JAFFIER.

Jaff. Hold : Eyes be dry ;
Heart strengthen me to bear
This hideous sight, and humble me :——take
The last forgiveness of a dying friend,
Betray'd by my vile falshood to his ruin.
Oh ! *Pierre ?*

Pier. Yet nearer.

Jaff. Crawling on my knees,
And prostrate on the earth, let me approach thee :
How shall I look up to thy injur'd face,
That always us'd to smile with friendship on me ?
It darts an air of so much manly virtue,
That I, methinks, look little in thy sight,
And stripes are fitter for me than embraces.

Pier. Dear to my arms, tho' thou'lt undone my fame,
I can't forget to love thee : prithee, *Jaffier*,
Forgive that filthy blow my passion dealt thee ;
I am now preparing for the land of peace,
And fain would have the charitable wishes
Of all good men, like thee, to b'efs my journey.

Jaff. Good ! I am the vilest creature, worse than e'er
Suffer'd the shameful fate thou'rt going to taste of.
Why was I sent for to be us'd thus kindly ?
Call, call me villain, as I am ; describe
The foul complexion of my hateful deeds ;
Lead me to th' rack, and stretch me in thy stead,
I've crimes enough to give it its full load,
And do it credit : thou wilt but spoil the use on't,
And honest men hereafter bear its figure
About 'em as a charm from treacherous friendship.

Offi. The time grows short, your friends are dead already.

Jaff. Dead !

Pier.

Pier. Yes, dead, *Jaffier*; they've all dy'd like men too!

Worthy their character.

Jaff. And what must I do?

Pier. Oh! *Jaffier*!

Jaff. Speak aloud thy burthen'd soul,
And tell thy troubles to thy tortur'd friend.

Pier. Friend! Could'st thou yet be a friend, a generous friend,

I might hope comfort from thy noble sorrows.
Heav'n knows I want a friend.

Jaff. And I a kind one,
That would not thus scorn my repenting virtue,
Or think, when he's to die, my thoughts are idle.

Pier. No! Live I charge thee, *Jaffier*.

Jaff. Yes, I will live:
But it shall be to see thy fall reveng'd
At such a rate as *Venice* long shall groan for.

Pier. Wilt thou?

Jaff. I will, by heav'n.

Pier. Then still thou'rt noble,
And I forgive thee. Oh!—yet——shall I trust thee?

Jaff. No; I've been false already.

Pier. Do'st thou love me?

Jaff. Rip up my heart, and satisfy thy doubtings.

Pier. Curse on this weakness. [He weeps.]

• *Jaff.* Tears! Amazement! Tears!

I never saw thee melted thus before;
And know there's something labouring in thy bosom
That must have vent: tho' I am a villain, tell me.

Pier. See'st thou that engine? [Pointing to the wheel.]

Jaff. Why?

Pier. Is't fit a soldier, who has liv'd with honour,
Fought nations quarrels, and been crown'd with conquest,

Be expos'd a common carcase on a wheel?

Jaff. Hah!

Pier. Speak: Is't fitting?

Jaff. Fitting?

Pier.

Pier. Yes, is't fitting ?

Jaff. What's to be done ?

Pier. I'd have thee undertake
Something that's noble to preserve my memory
From that disgrace that's ready to attain it.

Off. The day grows late, Sir.

Pier. I'll make haste. Oh ! *Jaffier !*
Tho' thou'lt betray'd me, do me some way justice.

Jaff. No more of that : thy wishes shall be satisfy'd
I have a wife, and she shall bleed : my child too
Yield up his little throat, and all
T'appease thee——

[Going away, Pierre holds him.

Pier. No—this—no more. *[He whispers Jaffier.*

Jaff. Hah ! Is't then so ?

Pier. Most certainly.

Jaff. I'll do't.

Pier. Remember.

Off. Sir.

Pier. Come, now I am ready.

[He and Jaffier ascend the Scaffold.

Captain, you should be a gentleman of honour ;
Keep off the rabble that I may have room
To entertain my fate, and die with decency.
Come.

[Takes off his Gown, Executioner prepares to bind him.

Friar. Son.

Pier. Hence, tempter.

Off. Stand off, priest.

Pier. I thank you, Sir.

You'll think on't ?

[To Jaffier.

Jaff. 'Twon't grow stale before to-morrow.

Pier. Now, *Jaffier !* now I am going. Now——

[Executioner having bound him.

Jaff. Have at thee,

Thou honest heart, then—here—— *[Stabs him.*
And this is well too. *[Then stabs himself.*

Friar. Damnable deed !

Pier.

Pier. Now thou hast indeed been faithful.
This was done nobly——We have deceiv'd the senate.

Jaff. Bravely.

Pier. Ha ha ha——oh! oh!

[*Dies.*

Jaff. Now, ye curs'd rulers,
Thus of the blood y've shed I make libation,
And sprinkle't mingling : may it rest upon you,
And all your race ; be henceforth peace a stranger
Within your walls ; let plagues and famine waste
Your generations——Oh! poor *Belvidera*!
Sir, I have a wife, bear this in safety to her,
A token that with my dying breath I bless'd her,
And the dear little infant left behind me.
I am sick——I'm quiet.

[*Jaffier dies.*

Offi. Bear this news to the senate,
And guard their bodies till there's farther orders :
Heav'n grant I die so well. [*Scene shuts upon them.*

Soft Music. Enter *BELVIDERA* distracted, led by two
of her Women, *PRIULI* and Servants.

Pri. Strengthen her heart with patience, pitying
heav'n.

Bel. Come, come, come, come, nay come to
bed,

Prithee, my Love. The winds; hark how they whistle:
And the rain beats : Oh! how the weather shrinks me!
You are angry now, who cares? Pish, no indeed.
Chuse then, I say you shall not go, you shall not.
Whip your ill-nature ; get you gone then ; oh!

[*Jaffier's Ghost arises.*

Are you return'd ; See father, here he's come again,
Am I to blame to love him? O thou dear one.

[*Ghost sinks.*

Why do you fly me? Are you angry still then?

Jaffier, where art thou? Father, why do you do thus?
Stand off, don't hide him from me. He's there some-
where.

Stand off, I say : what gone? Remember't, tyrant :
I may revenge myself for this trick, one day.

I'll

I'll do't—I'll do't. *Renault's* a nasty fellow ;
Hang him, hang him, hang him.

Enter OFFICER and others.

Pri. News, what news? [*Officer whispers Priuli.*

Off. Most sad, Sir;

Jaffier, upon the scaffold to prevent
A shameful death, stabb'd *Pierre*, and next himself:
Both fell together.

Pri. Daughter.

Belv. Ha! look there!

[*The Ghosts of Jaffier and Pierre rise together, both bloody.*
My husband bloody, and his friend too! murder!
Who has done this? speak to me, thou sad vision;

[*Ghost sinks.*

On these poor trembling knees I beg it: vanish'd—
Here they went done: Oh! I'll dig, dig the den up.
You shan't delude me thus. Hea, *Jaffier*, *Jaffier*.
Peep up, and give me but a look. I have him!
I've got him, father: Oh! now how I'll smuggle him!
My Love! my Dear! my Blessing! help me! help me!
Th' have hold on me, and drag me to the bottom.
Nay—now they pull so hard—farewel— [*She dies.*

Maid. She's dead,
Breathless and dead.

Pri. Then guard me from the sight on't:
Lead me into some place that's fit for mourning;
Where the free air, light, and the chearful sun
May never enter: hang it round with black;
Set up one taper, that may light a day,
As long as I've to live: and there all leave me:

*Sparing no tears, when you this tale relate,
But bid all cruel fathers dread my fate.*

[*Exeunt Omnes.*

EPILOGUE.

THE Text is done, and now for Application,
 And when that's ended, pass your Approbation.
 Tho' the Conspiracy's prevented here,
 Methinks I see another hatching there :
 And there's a certain Faction fain would sway,
 If they had Strength enough, and damn this Play :
 But this the Author bid me boldly say,
 If any take this Plainness in ill Part,
 He's glad on't from the Bottom of his Heart :
 Poets in honour of the Truth shou'd write,
 With the same Spirit brave Men for it fight.
 And though against him causeless Hatreds rise,
 And daily where he goes of late he spies
 The Scowls of sullen and revengeful Eyes ;
 'Tis what he knows, with much Contempt, to bear,
 And serves a Cause too good to let him fear.
 He fears no Poison from an incens'd Drab ;
 No Ruffian's Five foot Sword, nor Rascal's Stab ;
 Nor any other Snares of Mischief laid,
 Not a Rose-Alley Cudgel Ambuscade,
 From any private Cause where Malice reigns
 Or general Pique all Blockheads have to Brains ;
 Nothing shall damn his Pen, when Truth does call,
 No, not the * Picture-Mangler at Guildhall.
 The Rebel-Tribe, of which that Vermin's one,
 Have now set forward, and their Course begun ;
 And while that Prince's Figure they deface,
 As they before had massacred his Name,
 Durst their base Fears but look him in the Face,
 They'd use his Person as they've us'd his Fame :

* The Rascal that cut the Duke of York's Picture. A

*A Face in which such Line'ments they read
Of that great Martyr's, whose rich Blood they shed,
That their rebellious Hate they still retain,
And in his Son wou'd murder him again.
With Indignation then let each brave Heart
Rouse, and unite, to take his injur'd Part ;
Till Royal Love and Goodness call him Home,
And Songs of Triumph meet him as he come :
Till Heav'n his Honour and our Peace restore,
And Villains never wrong his Virtue more.*

F I N I S.



